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A SHORT HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY
OF
THE CULTIVATING PODS.
(An exposition of the origin of the Cultivating
Pods,—their status, ways of life and
social manners and customs.)

"It will be from amongst the records of home and family life, that light will be shed upon the complete history of Bengal. It will be by searching into caste origins, and tribal traditions that real data will be gathered for establishing the antiquity of processes."

Sister Nivedita.

BY
MAHENDRA NATH KARAN.

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पिता धर्मं पिता स्वर्गः पिता हि परमन्तपः ।
पितरि प्रीतिमापन्ने प्रियन्ते सर्व्व देवता ॥

This little history is inscribed
TO
MY FATHER
LATE BĀBU KSHEMĀNANDA KARAN
Whose
Fervent love for society
Inspires
My humble heart.

PREFACE.

Mother India embraces in her arms numerous tribes and castes,—hundreds of sects and communities and great diversities of faiths and religions. Of these, a very few people have the linked histories of their own,—as ages have passed without working upon their spirit of ardency for the study of their antiquities. Centuries rolled on :—there grew no curiosities in the minds of the people to turn over the leaves of their obscured past ! Thus after generations, the brilliant aspect of facts and truths got distorted and much coloured by conceding to idle exaggerations, fancies and falsehoods,—the raw truths sometimes having been manufactured into tales of wonder. In most cases, even there is left nothing in the form of such wondrous tales as being analysed by expert hands may present its true frame work to their inquisitive eyes. More deplorable is the case with the history of the Pods,—which lies almost blank as far as the eyes can reach. Old Sanskrit and Vernacular literatures of different periods are replete with the

historical anecdotes of the Hindus. Who knows where in the old torn and abstruse palm leaves, the protraits of the daily life of the Pods,—who are proud of a sublime past, are elaborately depicted! The region remains still unexplored,—the gateway still unopened,—the mysteries still unrevealed! It requires more deliberate labour, gifted ability and arduous devotion to push on this sacred task.

Hitherto, in the Census Reports and some miscellaneous other publications—it has been the fate of the Pods to be the objects of very uncharitable criticisms,—and attempts have been made to expose the status of the caste with a degree of contemptuous indifference, as many of our malignant countrymen,—who chanced to hold offices in the Census department—puffed up with a feeling of braggart social superiority and burning with the sinister motive of permanently fixing on the shoulder of a people the yoke of eternal subjection—the par of which can nowhere be found in this world,—acted upon their deep-bred prejudices and apathy and got up false and fictitious anecdotes regarding their manners of life,—the truth of which can best be challenged. Thus they replenished the stores of history with vile caricatures of facts for the future chroniclers,

—having recourse to represent the people in the stamp they wished,—merely for the gratification of a wanton malicious attitude with the clumsy object of blocking the progress of the children of this important unit of the nation ! Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley,—the Commissioner of the last Census operation of Bengal, Behar and Orissa,—acquits himself of any charge of misconception in the following remarks :—

“ The list merely summarizes the reports recieved and must be accepted with reserve. The utmost care has been taken to place the castes under the different categories only, when there was a general concensus of opinion about them,—and to reject views that were manifestly based on misconception ; but in other cases I was not in a position to judge of the correctness or incorrectness of the reports recieved, and errors may have been made.”

The Census Report for 1911 ; p. 233 ; para 520.

This shows that the Census Commissioner, too, entertained some doubts in the honesty and truthfulness of our countrymen who assisted him in the compilation of the Report ! Certainly this is a slur on our national character, and goes a considerable way in support of what Lord Macaulay and Lord Curzon said of us !

However, let me first deal with the various imaginative stories contributed to by different writers—regarding the origin of the caste :

Sir H. Risley said in his 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal'—" *The educated members of the caste claim for it a mixed descent from a Kayastha father and a Napit mother.*" The 'Viswakosh' exactly corroborates Sir Risley's narrative. It is more than curious that the educated members of a community,—who must be presumed to possess something of the common sense, will condescend to publish such an unfounded and disrespectful theory on their own origin! Mr. W. W. Hunter writes in his 'Statistical accounts of Bengal'—(The 24 Perganahs vol.).—" *They are said to be the offspring of a Sunri mother and a Napit father.*"—The Census Report for 1901 puts forward an almost similar legend,—saying,—"*They are descended from the union of a Vaisya man with a Sunri woman.*" A still more fanciful and strange account is given in the Khulna District Gazetteer p. 67, which runs as follows ;—

"The following story regarding the origin of the Pods and Chandals is current in Khulana. (?) A beautiful girl succumbed to the blandishments of a low caste lover and gave birth to a son. The intrigue and its result were kept secret and in due course the girl was married to a man of her own rank in life. She had several other sons, who were brought up in comfort, while her first born shifted for himself as best as he could. When the legitimate children grew up, they learnt the story of their

mother's frailty and persecuted their half-brother in all possible ways. Once, when he was away from home, they pulled up his paddy seedlings and planted them upside down. This was more than the bastard could bear, and he was about to commit suicide when the goddess Lakshmi appeared and caused the plants to bear crop of golden grain. The bastard is said to be the ancestors of the Pods, while the legitimate sons were the forefathers of the Chandals."

I enquired into the above legendary tale about the progenitors of the Pods, but wondered to find no existence of any such queer rumour in Khulna! Some authors have said,—"*there is a subcaste of Chandal known as Pod.*"* Some describes them, as the '*half-brothers of the Chandals*' probably laying stress on the foregoing story (myth?),—while some reproduces them as '*aboriginal*' or '*semi-aboriginal*' and '*amphibious*' specimens of the human races! Much more instances—based on total misconception—may be quoted at length.

Some imaginary subcastes of the Pods have been set up in various works,—not the one the least agreeing with the other;—*viz.* *Tanti* and *Chasi* Pods in the 24 Perganahs District Gazetteer; '*Bágánde*' and '*Khottá*' or '*Mouná*' Pods in

* *The Census Report for 1901*; p. 382.

Risley's 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal' and the Viswakosh;—and *Chhānchi* and *Jasuri* Pods in the Census Report for 1901. Such strange subcastes are even not known to the Pods themselves. In the Khulna District Gazetteer, some reflection is cast on the people for worshipping the Goddess of Sitalá—but I am well acquainted with the fact that the custom universally obtains among the inhabitants of Midnapore and other districts,—and a best Brahmin will esteem it his pride and thank his stars to propitiate the Goddess without any possibility of staining his Aryan birth. The author of the Census Report for 1901 observes:—“*It has been noticed elsewhere that the Pods still preserve some recollections of their old religion and worship Buddha under the name of Dharma Raj or Dharma Thakur.*” (*The Census Report for 1901*; p. 396). But on my enquiry into the practice, I found it to have existed or to exist nowhere among the Pods. Mahámohopádhyáya Hara Prasád Sástri, M.A., who made considerable scholastic researches into the worship of Dharma Debatá,—being asked, kindly wrote to me,—

“—I have investigated the question of Dharma Puja, but I do not remember having ever connected it with the Pods.”

Sir Risley mentions Balasore as one of the

districts in which the Pods are found to live. But far from extending to Balasore, they confine themselves in Contai Subdivision of the District of Midnapore, and do not go beyond it to further west. The following strange references to the practices of the caste were made by the same author and are worth notice :—"They will eat sweetmeats, drink and smoke with the fishing sub-castes of Bagdi, and these are admirably deemed to be nearly their equals in rank. * * The Sutradhar and Kapali, while they will eat sweetmeat and drink and smoke in company with a Pod,—will not use the same pipe or drink from the same lota." As far as my enquiries into the manners and customs of the caste are concerned, I can assert that there are no such usages prevalent among the Pods.

Mr. Jogendra Náth Bhattácharjee Bidyá Bhusan M.A.D.L., said in his *Hindu Castes and Sects* that the Pods are one of the castes which furnish by far the largest number of criminals ;—but from the Census Report for 1911 we are given to understand that the high classes of Bengal retain the greatest number of the inmates of jails, and also supply a far larger number of criminals than the Pods do.* It says: "*Of the*

* Inmates of Jails :—Brahmins 542, Kayastha 817, Pod 54, etc.

indigenous castes, the most law-abiding appear to be the Rajbansis, of whom only 2 per 100000 were in prison when the census was held. The population is only 1 per 10000 or less among the Jolahs, Jogis, Chasikaibarttas, Pods, Sadgops, Santals, Sahas and Sheiks. * * The largest number of Hindu criminals are Kayasthas and Brahmans." (Vide the Census Report for 1911, p. 1120). Alas, still they will get to say that the Pods are the most criminals! We cannot conceive anything more perverse! Shall we believe that the Pod criminals eluded the scrutinous researches of the Census authorities through the power of some magic?—This reminds us of the Sanskrit fable, in which the little kingfisher, which subsists on tiny fishes and watersnails only,—grieved over his lot for his particular title,—though there are many other

(Vide the Census Report for 1911; Appendix to Table XVI, part II, Group 168).

Beggars, prostitutes, criminals and inmates of jails and asylums:—

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|---------------|
| (i) Kayastha | ... | 831 males. | ... | 1484 females. |
| (ii) Pod | ... | 102 " | ... | 300 " |

(Ibid; Tables XVI headed 'Occupation by selected castes, tribes and races').

N. B.—It should be noticed that the Kayastha population of Bengal is almost twice as much as that of the Pods.

creatures consuming larger fishes in much more profusion ;—

“ সরট-করট চিল্লা: কঙ্কপক্ষি প্রভেদা:

অহি-নকুল-মহুয়া: কে ন খাদন্তি মৎস্তান ?

অহমপি কুশাগ্নী ক্রুদ্ধমৎস্তোপজীবী

জগতিবিদিতলোকৈকমৎস্তরক্ষা বলঙ্কী ! ”*

Instances of such irresponsible references to the caste for lowering it in public estimation are so very numerous that I reserve it for a separate treatise to deal with in full. I do not mention of the authors of some vernacular publications who are no less uncharitable and illdisposed to the caste.

Now, I turn to a more serious untruth which may mislead many to the belief that it is the result of a careful survey into the status of the caste and “*a record of existing facts*”—as the Census Commissioner defines the object of the Census. This relates to their occupation. Since the Census of 1872, more or less which have

* *i. e.* The crocodiles, crows, kites, herons, snakes, mongooses and men,—who do not eat fishes?—but slender-bodied and subsisting on tiny fishes though I am, my fate it is to bear, in this world, the disgraceful title of *Matsya ranká* (the Sanskrit name of the king-fishers implying *the most greedy for fishes*) !

been said as to the profession of the people,—will generally go to imply that they are one of the principal fishing castes of Bengal ! In the Census Report for 1911, the statistics of their present occupations show that out of per 1000 Pods, 871 males and 4 females are fishermen, while only 9 males and 3 females are cultivators ! According to the same the Pods are even said to out-number the Jaliá Kaibarttas and the Tiyars,—the two prevailing fishing castes of Bengal,—in the matter of fishing—as the latter are alleged to furnish only 519 males, 7 females and 513 males, 6 females per thousand respectively. * Thus, the status of a purely agricultural caste has been blackened with false-hoods in the pages of such immortal works, the authenticity of the records of which is taken as never questionable ! That by tradition they invariably adhere to the occupation of agriculture from time immemorial has been adequately proved in the present work by quoting extracts from some literatures of old. It is a well known fact that they are a purely agriculturist people, and still the fatiguing sweat of their brows turns out crop of grain for the subsistence of their country-

* Vide the Census Report for 1911, p. 574.

men who are untired in showing them the cloven foot of long-rooted prejudice and apathy,—apart from attempting to liberate their brethren from the cattle prison of centuries' ignorance ! I leave the matter to my generous readers to judge what a malignant campaign is organised by some of our high-class brethren to crush the aspiration of the backward classes, who probably thought that such unfounded records would be passed by unnoticed and unprotested by the people aimed at ! Alas, their object is defied and sure to be frustrated !*

* It is curious that in the same work—The Census Report for 1911, the truth that the Pods are a purely agricultural people is supported ! In p. 521, the Subsidiary Table I on "*Castes classified to their traditional occupation*,"—536000 Pods are mentioned as "*Cultivators including growers of special products*." This shows that almost the entire population is engaged in agriculture. Again, in p. 539, para 1065, the same Report remarks : "*Special statistics of the castes engaged in fishing in the Presidency and Burdwan Divisions show that half are Bagdis, and one-eighth are Malos, who only slightly outnumber the Jalia Kaibarttas. Of other castes, the most strongly represented are the Tiyars, Rajbanshis and Namasudras*." Here the Pods are not justly mentioned among the fishing castes. What the conflicting statements on the occupation of the Pods in the same work account for is not clear. In commenting on fishing, The Census Report says :

I will leave aside this unpleasant task after dealing with one more : The instructions regarding the preparation of the Annual Reports and Returns of Education for the period ending 31st March, 1918,—as issued by the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, lay down that the Pods etc.,—along with some untouchable and aboriginal tribes, are to be entered in the column under the heading of *Depressed classes* in the General Table VA,—and not in that reserved for the Non-Brahmin Hindus. The *Dichotomous* divisions—Brahmins and non-Brahmins—of the term *Hindu* no doubt imply the Hindu population in its entirety. According to this circular the Pods are excluded from the category of the Non-Brahmin Hindus and this exclusion means that they are not Hindus at all ! In pursuance of this

“As explained in 1901, the two occupations (i.e., catching and selling fish) should be amalgamated, as they cannot be kept distinct. A few sections of the fishing community catch fish, but do not retail them and a few others expose them for sale.” Is it for the fact that the Pods catch fish not for retailing but for their own consumption,—they should be stigmatised as fishermen? In Bengal, all castes—from Brahmin to Chandal—use to catch fish for their own use;—will they, then, fall in the category of fishermen?

instruction, the Pods, to their utter surprise and disgrace, were returned as different from the Non-Brahmin Hindus. If they do not fall in the category of the Hindus,—what are they?—What religion should they be said to profess,—expelled in this way from all the strata of Hinduism? That the Pods hold on to a purely Hindu status even more rigidly than their high-class brethren do, is such a transparent fact that it requires no mention nor explanation;—and any unbiased inquisitive eye cannot but see it. What led the authorities to stigmatise the people with such offensive stamp,—to the base satisfaction of a class of men who are always on the look-out for seeing their prestige somehow exposed,—seems to be a puzzle.

Sir Risley's classifications of the caste precedence in Bengal places the Pods high above the group containing many tribes and castes * with whom they are wrongly combined by the Educational Authorities. In the Education Report of 1890—91, the Director writes :—

“Again there are backward races in Bengal proper—

* Vide “*The People of India*”—P. 120; also, The Census Report of Bengal, 1901, p. 369. These classifications, too,—as far as the Pods are concerned,—are incorrect and open to objections.

Chandals, Domes and Bagdis for instance,—who are in a low stage of civilization, but are regularly returned as Hindus. There are great difficulties in the way of a separate classification of these backward races, but if this could be done, their educational progress could be traced as clearly as that of Mahomedans. There is no very clear line of demarcation between the latter and genuine aborigines."

This shows that the authorities had a wish to fix the demarcating line between the backward races and genuine aborigines in order to have more amount of attention paid to the spread of education among the classes of the Hindus which are backward in the matter. But if this be the object of the authorities why are the backward and the aborigines intermingled with one another and made to stand on the same level in the instructions under review? Then again, if the authorities intend to differentiate in this way the uneducated or poorly-educated classes from those who have received more education and culture,—it can be well said that they are certainly misled as far as the records of the Census Report of 1911 are concerned. I quote some remarks as regards the education of this caste from this Report :—

"As regards other castes it is noticeable that two of the ambitious castes that are endeavouring to raise their

social status, *viz.*, the Chasi Kaibarttas and Pods, have reached a very fair average of literacy. * * * The Pods, on the other hand, have made great strides, the proportion of literates having been nearly doubled. Considerable advance has also been made by the Namasudras and Rajbanshis, but inspite of this only one in every 20 can read and write, whereas among tne Chasi Kaibarttas one in nine, and among the Pods one in seven, can do so."

The Census Report for 1911, para 697.

"—Thus the Kaibarttas, Pods, Namasudras and Rajbanshis all show signs of improvement, and the Pods especially have made great strides."

Vide Govt. Resolution No 3435, dated 14th July, 1913 on the Census Report of Bengal, etc.

The above extract of the Census Report and its *Subsidiary Table VI on Education by castes* will prove that the Pods have made more progress in education than a number of castes,—but were it the object of the Educational authorities to classify those who have got less education, then why are the classes—who are less advanced in education,—excepted from the list contained in the Director's Instructions? The object of the authorities being not made out, we fear that the circular under review has got into it some malicious and unsympathetic contributions of some prejudicial Indian officers just as the Census Report was rendered faulty. However, I conclude

this with the glowing remarks of Lieutenant Colonel U. N. Mukherjee, the fervent friend of the backward classes,—who reviewed the Educational policy of Government in long series of articles:—

“That education among those sections of the Hindus whom they stigmatised as “low caste” was in a backward condition was fully known to the officials. In his report for 1891-92, the Director says,—“These percentage (of boys and girls of school going age) are low enough, being 26.2 per boys and 1.7 per girls, and considering that nearly every boy of the higher and middle classes and of the literate castes such as Brahmans, Kayasthas and Baidyas attend schools,—the percentage of the boys of the lower classes under tuition must be very low indeed.”

But what was the upshot of the cleavage and demarcation? A large section of the Hindus were given the official name of low castes—that they were backward as regards education was fully recognised, but there is not a whisper that they were to be helped in any way. The Government brand of ‘low caste’ was their only gain!”

The Education Policy of Government by Liet. Col.

U. N. Mukherjee. Chap. CVIII.

(Vide ‘The Bengalee’ July, 10, 1918).

Not long ago I chanced to be acquainted with Bábu Purnachandra Roy, the editor, ‘*Nityánanda Sebak*’ and a devoted and ardent worker of the Pundra or Punro community chiefly inhabiting the districts of Malda, Rajsahi,

Murshidabad, and Birbhum. Since my acquaintance with the gentleman we have held between ourselves series of correspondence, and at last both of us have been satisfied to arrive at the conclusion that the Pods and Punros sprang from a common origin and that for their distant habitations they have remained separated from interchanging communications. As strangers to each other, they have so long disclaimed all sorts of affinities between themselves, and even tried to depreciate each other in their social literatures. The long standing mistake has disappeared, and there is every reason to believe that they are ready to join hands with each other after a protracted separation, and fight for a cognate goal. May the time be not far off, when the two sections,—proud of a common ancestry, will stand side by side and work shoulder to shoulder for shaking off the gloom and curse of centuries—heartlessly imposed on them!

The Punros represent the two *Rahrese* sub-castes of the Poundra Kshattriyas,—while the Pods are identified to form the other two subdivisions—the *Bangaja* and *Odraja*. These four subdivisions of the Poundras find mention in the Kulatantra, the Viswakosh, the Census Report for 1901, etc. Rái Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

Báhádur first expressed his opinion that the two people had been the same in origin ;—and quite recently I find support of the view in several more authorities, of which I quote the Census Report for 1901 :—

“The Pundaris or Puros are found mainly in Birbhum, Malda, Rajsahi and Murshidabad. The name seems to indicate that they are in reality Pods, but by residence at a distance from the head quarter of the caste they have gradually come to lose connection with it, and the Puros of Malda profess to know nothing of the Pods of the 24 Perganas though they admit that they belong to the same caste as Puros of Birbhum.”

Vide the Census Report, 1901, p. 425.

I should say here that during my acquaintance with Purna Bábu, I was aware of none of the views set forth above, and quite independently we framed our opinions. It affords me great pleasure to learn that my humble conclusion had been long ago arrived at by such distinguished authorities.

I take the opportunity to own my great indebtedness to the author of “*Jatibibeka*,” whose diligent and scholastic researches on the subject are, in every way, original and praiseworthy. I must admit that this little history is mainly based on the lines laid by him.

Certainly I do not pretend to make any new

discoveries;—at least my limited knowledge on the subject precludes the possibility of such a pretension. This is rather an invitation to competent hands to unlock the store house of history,—to bring out rich ores from the gloomy mine. I should unite myself with the following words of the great scholar in introducing this humble work to my generous readers :

“And, however, unfit I feel myself to accomplish the task, I, nevertheless, venture to make a commencement in the hope that abler scholars will pardon my short-comings, rectify my inevitable errors and perform skillfully and well what I may do clumsily or leave undone.”*

Living in a very interior and out of the way place, I could not avail myself of the help of a good library of books in compiling this little work, nor did I find time to go elsewhere for the purpose owing to the repeated family mishaps so often overtaking me. I should say that the thing would have been done in a wide and elaborate manner, had I found opportunity to consult more authorities and books of reference regarding the subject. In view of some urgency, the book has been got up in a hurry. Would

* Mr. R. C. Dutt, in his “*Civilisation in Ancient India.*”

I live to see the reprint of the book any time, I will spare no pains in contributing to it more thoughts and informations. I express my thanks to my friend Bábu Rákhál Krishna Mandal, a student of the Calcutta Medical College and an ardent lover of the society, for his helping me with some notes from the Imperial Library, as required by me.

My thanks are due to my esteemed friends Bábus Rái Charan Sardár, B. L. Pleader. Munsiffs' Court, Diamond Harbour and the editor of the "Brátya Kshattriya Bándhab,"—Bhabasindhu Laskar, B. L. Pleader, Judges' Court, Alipore, the Vice-Chairman of the Alipore Local Board and the editor, the "Pratigná," Kshirode Chandra Dás, B. L. Pleader, Munsiffs' Court, Contai, and a fervent worker for the social cause, and Manindra Náth Mandal of Kasáriáh, Midnapore,—the author of "The Aryan Poundrakas" and some other valuable publications,—for their kindly looking over the MS. of this little history. I must, in a special degree, acknowledge the ardent endeavour of the first-named gentleman for the publication of this treatise,—but for which it was impossible for me to bring it so sooner before the public. I would welcome with thanks any correspondence regard-

ing any error or misrepresentation of facts crept into this book through mistake or proper insight, and am ever ready to enter into discussions on the subject.

I owe my sincere gratitude to Prof. Panchanan Mitra M.A., P.R.S., who has very kindly contributed a most valuable foreward—worthy of his scholastic genius, which has certainly added a glowing lustre to the dark pages of this humble work.

The gentlemen, who came forward with liberal response to our prayer for funds for the publication of this history, deserve my cordial praise and gratitude;—those, who paid rupees fifty and upwards are mentioned as follows:—
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Sreedhar Chandra Roy, Zemindar, Ballygunj, Rs. 50 and Ram Gopal Das Naskar Zeminder, Russa, Rs. 50.

BHANGAN MARI	}	MAHENDRA NATH KARAN.
JANKA P. O.		
DIST. MIDNAPORE		
<i>The 1st Sept.</i>		
1919 A.D.		

GLIMPSES OF THE ORIGIN AND THE GLORIOUS PAST OF THE POD PEOPLES.

(By Prof. Panchanan Mitra, M.A., P.R.S.)

Very few nations can lay claim to a hallowed antiquity entitling them to a place in the authentic generic classification of the famous tenth chapter of the Genesies of the Hebrew Bible—yet strange as it may seem a class which still may boast of a larger total accumulated wealth and higher percentage of education than many so-called high castes of India, and yet it is set down as “depressed” (!) by the Census Reports of the Christian Government, the Pods of Bengal very possibly belong to one of them. Simcox* has rightly drawn attention to the possibilities of a sober estimate of this chapter and its great value thus—“The Biblical genealogies do not represent a minute local tradition but rather the best judgment of the best informed men of their times as to the relationship and affinities of

* Primitive civilizations, Vol. I. p. 2.

contemporary nations. And this is just what constitutes their value, for if different nations speak languages which pre-philological observers can see to be and have usages and features so conspicuously of the same type as to suggest a common origin in spite of political separation and antagonism. This is good evidence so far as it goes and may be accepted in the absence of facts on the other side." Now, remembering the good old dictum of St. Augustine that the names there refer to "*gentes non homines*", nations not men, and how also two of the three names of the descendants of Noah are still used commonly to indicate scientific, linguistic and often ethnological groups, we pass on to a detailed examination of the second group (the first group being Semitic) *i.e.*, the Hamitic stock.

Of the sons of Ham we reckon Cush, Mizraim, Put and Cannan.* Cush is identified easily with the Cushites from the names of its descendants most of which are obviously the towns which this stock inhabited. So also is the case with Mizraim (mark the plural number) which stands

* As it has been often contended that the Ancient Egyptians were Aryans, the Hamitic stock possibly represents an early Aryan branch, considering that the word 'Mizraim' decidedly means Egyptians.—Editor.

for Egyptians and Canaan representing Canaanites.

But what about Put? That the geneologists had not brought in accidentally a name but meant what they stated is seen by the same repetition, the same details about the other three and the same mention of Put and silence about its later whereabouts in I Chotonicles, 8—16. Can we explain the mystery about a race with which the Hebrews were acquainted well enough to insist upon its racial affinities, yet the ignorance about its home and habitations could not lead them into further details? Isn't this very possible in the case of traders from far-off lands familiar in their marts but coming from homes with too outlandish names to be capable of comprehension by the conservative Hebrews? If this was so, who could these traders be of such a remote date? Surely not the Phoenicians who come into being very much later to be masters of maritime commerce and who were too near to have an air of mystery about them and still less the Jews themselves, who had not yet closed the nomadic chapter of their life and settled into agricultural occupations to develop into traders and capitalists much later.

Again, we know from Egyptian wall-paintings

that the Mizraim were neither black, nor yellow, nor white,—but red. Indeed the colour indication again points forcibly to the enterprising Phœnicians, which word itself was the nickname given to them by the Greeks owing to their redness. But they were, as already stated then, *non-est* and the only possible quarter of the ancient world mysteries by its distance,—but well-known by its commodities which could have accommodated the world at this ancient date—was ‘far-off Ind,’ which must have already begun its world-renowned trade in cloths ‘Patta,’—which is but the very echo of Put. The name itself,—its marked affinity with our ‘Pods,’—its common occurrence as the termination of the names of many sea-port towns of Southern India, affords us more than one clue. For it has nothing to do with cotton-cloth but indicates some coloured garments. Readers of the excellent book of De Candolle—“The origin of cultivated Plants” (1909) turning up the headings of ‘cotton’ and ‘flax’ would at once realise how very recent, comparatively speaking, the cotton trade is. The Egyptians, it is well-known, wore first flaxen or linen garments and not cotton and the most ancient section of the Tamils of the Deccan are known as

'Shen Tamil,' and a weaver's sley is still known in colloquial Bengali as 'Sānā'—which words are connected with the Bengali word 'Sana' (flax) and not with any name for cotton.

Putting things together can we not say that these Pods of Bengal who cannot have come of the primitive aboriginal black negrito element of the Indians owing to the conspicuous absence of dark skins amongst their castes still and the notable prevelance of reddish colour,—narrow slender dolicho-cephalic heads and peaked noses—reminding us strongly of the ruling race of Egypt—were the first agricultural race of India ruling over the primitive hunters and herdsmen and developing a highly enterprising industrial and commercial life,—and carrying on a brisk trade with Pattas (flax fabrics?)*—giving the name 'clothing ports' to various towns of the Deccan,—and retaining traces of their former activities in the word 'Bastra' (which probably was a later Sanskritised form of the word Patta) as well as the racial name of the still pushing class of traders in the Deccan,—the Bhatyás (Patta or Batta or cloth-dealers),—their flaxen

* Vide the Viswakosh—where 'Pundra' and 'Patta-bastra' are given as synonyms. Editor.

or linen trade gradually falling into disfavour with the introduction of cotton. It is not out of place to point out how still the weaving castes bear names like 'Patve' in Gujrat, 'Pator' in Orissa and 'Pattanurkaran' in the Deccan,—words which cannot at all be connected with cotton (vide passim Baines, *Ethnography*, 1912, p. 62).

Is it too much to state that the name which thus meets us persistently in various parts of Hindu India records but the vicissitudes of one single race which was once so great whose status in different parts has been but the outcome of different local conditions? Is it possible that the 'Pods' of Bengal have suffered the most being originally Jainas (as 'Pundravardhanias' was one of the three main Jaina sects), the hereditary foes of Buddhism who got short shrift in a province where Buddhism was the dominant religion till late mediæval times and has been shown not to have died out completely even in the present day.

The industrial enterprise of this 'Pod' race did not stop here. Great capitalists, they were the first to exploit the rich mines of India and at least one, the only Beryl mine known to the ancient world; *Padiyur* in the Deccan probably

still bears their name (witness also the names Pānnā and Padmarāga).

Time will also show that this race did not lack in martial and administrative abilities as well. When it will be recognised that the 'n', of 'Pāndu,' 'Pandyān,' 'Pundra' 'Pānduā' is not the cerebral n (স্বৰ্দ্ধ্বজ 'n'), but the Tamil ன̣ approximating more the nasal 'ঞ' then alone will be clearly realised the vast tract over which this great race once ruled. They can indeed be proud for having given their racial name to the glorious five Pāndavas of the Mahābhārata as well as the greatest national deity of India Krishna, Pundarikāksha, 'the eye of the Pundarika race'? It is their name again that probably looms large in historical India whether in the most ancient 'Pāndyan' dynasties of the Deccan or the great 'Padmas' of the Nanda dynasty of Magadha, probably the last great glimmers of a 'dying race' in the North-Eastern and Southernmost tract of a vast land,—most of which was once their own. It needs only to remember how the great civilised Britons fared at the hands of the then barbarous Angles and Jutes and Saxons, and were compelled to take refuge in the S. westernmost nooks of Cornwall, or the mountain fastnesses of Wales or Scotland to explain how

this great agricultural and industrial homogeneous race scattered and fled before the iconoclastic 'Goths and Vandals or rather Dorians and Ionians of ancient India, I mean, the pastoral races coming from the direction of 'Ariane' who forcibly shut out the old chapter of Indian History.

Indeed, it is high time that we accept the sound and sober conclusions of Dr. Gastave Oppert's magnificent book "The Original Inhabitants of Bhāratbarsa"—as given below :—
 "Indeed, I think that as a general name comprising all the inhabitants of India that of *Bharata* should have the preference because all classes and clans of the population can put in a claim for it. Even the Brāhmans, to whom it does not properly apply, could have no objection to it, in consequence of their ancient and intimate connexion with the Bharata-kings, and their present high position as principal leaders in temporal and spiritual matters of the population of Bhāratbarsha. Such a name will bridge over the great social chasms, which divide at present the Hindus,—and perhaps bring together in union the two great antagonistic sections of the original inhabitants, which since the earliest times of antiquity have lived estranged from

each other, not always perhaps, in open enmity and war, yet never in sincere friendship. I mean those divisions which appear in history and occasion as Kurus and Pāñchālas, Goudians and Dravidians etc. To all these kindred tribes, the term *Bharata* can be applied, and I consider that by accepting such a time-honoured and honourable name as their national designation, a great step towards national unity would be taken in India" (p. 622-623). The day indeed would not be far off if with an open mind, true knowledge and clear insight we can realise that the great division of Manu according to "Varna" or colour,—the White, the Red, the Yellow and the Black was as much academic and non-social in character at the start as modern terms Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian etc., or Xanthochroi, Melanochroi etc., or Dolichocephalic, Brachy-cephalic, Mesaticephalic etc., etc.

That this was so is clearly proved by the later pages of this excellent manual how in the ancient days the Pods and like races ranked according to their colour as Kshattriyas. It was only the dark days of later ignorance, personal avarice and wicked caprice that built up a farrago of lies and an unweildy superstructure whose very incoherences, incongruities and in-

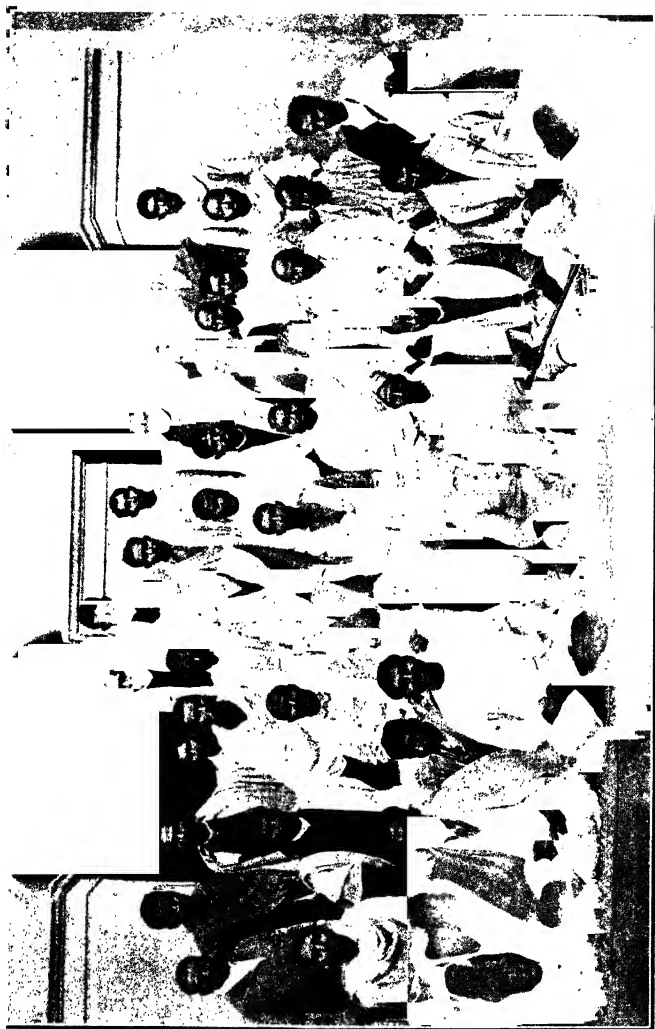
consistencies between actual and theoretical status-
 (witness the position of Kāyasthas of Bengal
 ranking in social position next, if at all, to the
 Brahmins yet observing mourning like the Sudras)
 argue later capricious accretion in different ways
 at different times and places, and not a homoge-
 neous growth of a systematic structure. And
 what is more deplorable, skin-deep studies of
 touchables and untouchables, Hindus and non-
 Hindus, Brahmins and non-Brahmins have added
 the last bitter to it. Oh capricious Ignorance
 and shallow Short-sightedness what a lasting
 mischief with thy mighty Vallāls and Max
 Müllers thou hast done to Bengal and India
 at large !!

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.		Incorrect.	Correct.
vi (Preface)	10	...	a best	... the best.
„	27	...	Sir Risley	... Sir H. Risley.
vii	17	...	Mr.	... Dr.
„	„	...	Bidyá	... Vidyá.
viii	9	...	most	... largest.
xi	4	...	cattle prison	fen.
„	„	...	centuries'	... centuries of
„	8	...	the backward	whom they call the back- ward.
„	11	...	defied	... doomed.
xii	7	..	untouchable	so-called un- touchable.
xiii	17	...	Sir Risley	... Sir H. Risley.
3	12	...	'Poundra'	... 'Poundra.'
4	9	...	विहीनः	... विहीनः।
5	7	...	'Biswakosh'	the Viswakosh.
„	20	...	Bishmaparba	Bhismaparba.
6	14	...	Kingdom	... kingdom.
9	13	...	elected	... selected.
19	11	...	Houen	... Hiouen

Page.	Line.	Incorrect.	Correct.
23	... 6 (foot-note)	তদেশসংজ্ঞকাঃ ...	তদেশসংজ্ঞকাঃ ॥”
24	... 19 ,,	লক্ষণায়ৈতদর্থ	... লক্ষণায়ৈতদর্থ ।
27	... 15 ,,	withheld	... withheld.
31	... 3 ,,	Biswakosh	... Viswakosh.
32	... 7 ...	ভূবি	ভূবি ।
37	... 9 (foot-note)	Pods	... Pods.
38	... 7 (foot-note)	কৃত্র	... কৃত্র ।
39	... 5 ,,	in disguise	... in the disguise.
39	... 5 (foot-note)	কৈবর্তকড়	... কৈবর্তকড় ।
51	... 4 ,,	godesses	... goddesses.
59	... 10 ...	began	... begun.
72	... 22 ...	began	... begun.
73	... 3 ...	rise on	... rise to.
77	... 1 ...	only the	... the only.
80	... 20 ...	elevatiion	... elevation.

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A SHORT HISTORY AND ETHNOLOGY

OF

THE CULTIVATING PODS.

The Pods inhabit most parts of Western Bengal, especially the districts of 24 Perganahs, Khulna, Midnapore and Jessore. Their population,—as estimated in the last census having comprised more than half a million of souls, has formed an important factor of the Hindu Society of Bengal.* They are distinguish-

* The census report for 1911 tells us the numerical strength of the Pods distributed over various districts as following:—

Burdwan Division	...	Male	...	Female
Burdwan	...	32	...	24
Birbhum	...	19	...	16
Midnapore	...	14858	...	14373
Hooghly	...	3090	...	2476
Howrah	...	10781	...	10183

ed by different names in different localities,—somewhere by Padmaráj (পদ্মরাজ) or Padyaráj (পদ্য়ারাজ),—somewhere by Pundarika (পুণ্ডরীক) and in some places by the name of Poundra (পৌণ্ড্র). In localities adjacent to Calcutta they are generally known as the Pods (পোদ), and in Midnapore sometimes as the Baláis (বলাই). Of these, Padmaráj, Pundarika and Poundra claim to be Sanskrit words; and curiously enough,—only the term 'Poundra' bears meanings significant of castes. On the otherhand, from the present

Presidency Division	...	Male	...	Female
24-Perganahs	...	169104	...	164643
Calcutta	...	862	...	593
Nadia	...	906	...	875
Murshidabad	...	160	...	165
Jessore	...	3703	...	3394
Khulna	...	70633	...	65629
Rajshahi Division.				
Rangpur	...	24	...	0
Bogra	...	1	...	0
Darjeeling	...	0	...	7
Dacca Division.				
Dacca	...	0	...	8
Faridpur	...	7	...	0
Chittagong Division.				
Tipperah	...	1	...	0
Feudatory State.				
Coch Behar	...	0	...	1

inferior social position which the Pods have been put to, some think that they came from the Pulindas (পুলিন্দ),—a non-Aryan primeval race of India,—who have been classified as Mlechhas in the Sástras*.

In no way the rules of Philology admit of the conversion of 'Pulinda' into 'Pod.' That 'Pod' was not derived from 'Pulinda' is testified and borne out. Mahámahopadhyáya Sadáshib Kábyakantha, the reputed Secretary of the "Mukti mandap Pandit Savá," Puri, writes,—“—'Pod' is a corruption of 'Poundra' 'Pulinda' can never be changed into 'Pod' after the Prákrita Grammar of Pingala. According to the Prákrita

* ভেদাঃ কিরাতা শবরা পুলিন্দা শ্লেচ্ছ জাতয়ঃ ।

The Amarkosha.

পুলিন্দা নাহলা নিষ্ট্যাঃ শবরাবক্টা ভট্টাঃ ।

মালাভিল্লাঃ কিরাতাশ্চ সর্কেহপি শ্লেচ্ছ জাতয়ঃ ॥

The Dictionary of Hemchandra.

পুলিন্দঃ পুরুসশ্চৈব খসো বৈ যবনস্তথা ।

* * * * *

শ্লেচ্ছস্ত সংবভূবুশ্চ শ্লেচ্ছ ভেদাস্ত এবহি ।

The Brihadharma Purána.

Also :—

Chap. X.

বহবো শ্লেচ্ছরাজানঃ পৃথিব্যাং সমুদ্রাধিপা ।

অক্সাঃ শকাঃ পুলিন্দাশ্চ যবনাশ্চ নরাধিপাঃ ॥

The Mahábhárat,—Ban Parba

Chap. CLXXXVIII.

Grammar of Bararuchi—the rules “নবিন্দু পরে,”—
 “বিন্দু পরে বর্তমানানাম্ বর্ণানাম্ দ্বিত্বম্ ন ভবতি”—“যথা সন্দত্তো”
 support the change of ‘Pulindo’ (পুলিন্দো) from
 ‘Pulinda.’ The manners and customs of the
 Pods do not at all conform with those of the
 Mlechhas who are defined in the following
 way,—

“গোমাংস খাদকো যশচ বিরুদ্ধং বহুভাষতে ।

সর্বাচার বিহীনাশ্চ শ্লেচ্ছ ইত্যভিধীয়তে ॥”

Boudháyana.

i.e. Mlechhas are those who do not abstain
 from beef, use much irrelevant talks and are
 devoid of all good manners.*

None of the above characteristics of a Mlechha
 will be found inherent in the Pods.

* Cf :—কল্পবীর্যেন শূদ্রায়ামৃতু দোষেন পাপতঃ ।

বলবন্তো দুরন্তাশ্চ বভুবুর্লোচ্ছ জাতয়ঃ ॥

অবিদ্ধকর্ণা কুরাশ্চ নির্ভয়া রণদুর্জয়াঃ ।

শৌচাচারবিহীনাশ্চ দুষ্কৰ্মা ধৰ্মবর্জিতাঃ ॥

The Brahmbaibarta Purána

Brahma Khanda, Chap. X.

Slks. 119-120.

Contrary to this, the Pods have the religious ceremony
 of boring through the ears of their male children (কর্ণবেধ),
 and they practise every rite of purification (শৌচাচার) and
 are not devoid of religion (ধৰ্মবর্জিত) ।

According to the Báman Purána, the Pulindas were inhabitants of the country lying between the Himalayas and Kalinjara.* But in other old Sanskrit authorities, this place is identified as having been inhabited by the Kulindas or Kunindas. The famous Bengali Encyclopedia 'Biswakosh' observes—"The Pulindas seem to have been the aboriginal and uncivilised Dassys,—who had lived in Gujrat and Maharástra. In 'Savá Parba'—in the description of Sahadeb's conquest of the four quarters, it is stated that Sahadeb having subjugated the Náchinas and the Arbuka kings,—conquered the king of Bátá and the Pulindas, and proceeded southwards.

Some think that the present Abu hill was Arbuka, and Bátápipuri (Bádámi) was Bátá. Most probably the adjoining places of Bádámi extending from the east of Gujrat were inhabited by the Pulindas. In the Mahábhárat—Bishmaparba, there is a mention of "सिन्धुपुलिन्दकाः" (Sindhu Pulindaká), which too justifies that they were inhabitants of Ran to the south of Sindh. The Pulindas finding mention in the Sáhábájarh

* বঙ্গদেশবাস্তবমাত্রি মুখ্যগোহিমাাত্রি কালঞ্জরায়ো: পুলিন্দা: ।

edict of Asoka and Kathásaritságar, seem to have been a section of the present Bhills. Mr. Cunningham, in his Archaeological Survey Reports Vol. XVII, p. 139 remarks that the Bhillakas and the Sabaras were of the same descent with the Pulindas."*

The Skanda Purána, Tápikhanda 9/24, describes that Pulindabana was a sacred place—where the God Máhadeva lived surrounded by the Pulindas. This place was near the river Tápti in the Deccan. According to the Mahábhárat (Vismaparba, Chap. IX), Brahmánda Purána (Chap. XLIX) and Garud Purána, Pulinda was a Southern Indian Kingdom.

All the above goes to show that the Pulindas were the inhabitants of the Deccan. They cannot be confounded with the Pods,—solely inhabiting a few districts of Bengal.

It seems that the Pulindas had been occasional comers to Bengal to earn their livelihood by following their calling of drummers,—just as the Up-country sweepers and

The profession of the Pulindas is far different from that of the Pods.

* The translation is of the author. Mr. R. C. Dutt mentions in his famous History of Civilisation in ancient India, 'Pulinda' as a country of the Deccan. Vide Vol. II, p. 4.

Uria Pálki bearers do now. Their services were requisitioned during local festivities. We find in the Bengali poem, the 'Chandi' by Kavikankan Mukundarám—who flourished in the 16th Century A.D. :—

“পুলিন্দ কিরাত কোল

হাটেতে বাজায় ঢোল,”

i.e., the Pulindas, the Kirátas and the Kolas used to beat drums in the markets. We have never heard the Pods to have taken such a low profession in any of their former generations; nor do we find them pursuing it now. Also it will be shown hereafter that a famous Bengalee poet—almost contemporaneous to Kavikankan included the Pods in the conclave of the nobility. At that remote time, as even now, their profession has all along been agriculture. In another old Bengali poem,—the Siváyana or 'Siva Sankirtana' by Rámeswar Bhattácharjee,—a very explicit reference to the profession of the Pods was made. On Párbati's imploration for tilling lands for crops to undo the legendary poverty of the house,—the Lord Siva replied thus,—

“বল বিলক্ষণ কিন্তু শুন শৈলমুতা ।

দেবতার পোদ-স্বস্তি বড়ই লঘুতা ॥

ভিক্ষাহুখে সুখে আছি আকিঞ্চন পণে ।

চাষ চেষে' বিস্তর উদ্বেগ পাব মনে ॥

শুনিতে সুন্দর চাষ আশ্রাস বিস্তর ।

সকল সম্পূর্ণ যার নাহি তার ডর ॥”

The above extract clearly indicates that at that time the traditional occupation of the Pods was purely agriculture as it is now, and this occupation was so exclusively and solely practised by the Pods that the profession of a Pod even passed as a synonym for agriculture. This sufficiently speaks for the Pods' dissociation from the Pulindas. It is quite reasonable and clear that the term 'Pulinda' is capable of assuming the form of 'Pali' (পলি) which is the name of an aboriginal unclean caste inhabiting the Santal Parganahs and subdividing itself into Márpali, Kumárpali, Dhángarpali etc. The Koches, too, have a division called 'Pali'* Their manners and customs are quite peculiar and not in harmony with those of the Hindus.

* Vide “বঙ্গালীর উৎপত্তি” by late Bankim Babu, “সম্বন্ধ নির্ণয়” by Pandit Lálmohan Vidyánidhi, “বঙ্গালার পুরাবৃত্ত” by Babu Paresh Nath Banerjee and “বিশ্বকোষ” etc., etc.

“পলি শব্দ পুলিন্দ শব্দের অপভ্রংশ বলিয়া বোধ হয় ।”

Bángálár Purábritta (—p. 50).

On the contrary all the characteristic good manners of a good Sudra are found existing in the Pods. Their rice-taking ceremonies, marriages, funeral oblations and various other religious rites and social celebrations—with the only exceptions of Churákaran (Tonsure of the child's head), and Upanayana (Investiture with the sacred thread)—are observed and performed strictly after the rigid Sástric laws. They have their priests taken from among the Shrottriya (versed in the Vedas) Brahmins and not elected out of their own castemen. Those priests have remained excommunicated from their own class for the mere fault of ministering the religious services of a caste fallen to the state of Sudras.* The preceptors or spiritual

* It may seem strange and unusual to our reader that the Brahmins would stand excommunicated for officiating as priests of a Sudra people or a people sunken down into the state of Sudras, at a time when ministration to Sudras was no longer regarded as a low profession by the Brahmins—though condemned in Sástras;—but the circumstances were different here. The Pods long lived in disguise in Bengal without the ministration of the Brahmins; and their Sudra neighbours, who, from time immemorial, had been enjoying the consultation of the Brahmins,—naturally kept them at a distance for their apparent dissociation

advisers of the Pods,—though of high birth, have never been out-casted for receiving them as disciples.* They generally live by cultivation ; some

from the Brahmins,—though temporary. And, consequently several Brahmins, who had the courage of performing the religious services of these strange people, were left excluded from their own class. Moreover, later on, their non-submission to the Brahminists duly, back from Buddhism, was also a cause of the excommunication of their priests,—as will be shown afterwards.

* “Pods marry their daughters between the ages of five and nine years, forbid widow marriage and do not recognise divorce. * * * Their marriage is of the orthodox type,—the ceremony of Kusandica alone being omitted. Sampradán or the offering of the bride to the bridegroom and his acceptance of the gift forms the binding position of the ritual.

In addition to the well-known sects of Saiva, Sáкта, and Vaishnava, we find among the Pods a large number of Souras and Gánapatyas,—sects very sparingly represented among the higher classes of the Hindus in Bengal. The caste employ as their priests Ráhri Brahmins, who are held to be so far degraded by serving them that higher class Brahmins will not take food or water from their hands. The Gurus of the Pods are Ráhri Gossáins, but these, I understand, have in no way forfeited their position among Brahmins, though in some cases they eat and drink in Pods' houses. An instance of this was brought to my notice recently as evidence of the growth of the

may be found following other pursuits which are not at all condemnable. Though some exception as regards good manners may be quite infrequently marked in men stricken with poverty,—we unhesitatingly account for it relying on the wellknown Sanskrit saying—

“দারিদ্র্য দোষো গুণরাশিনাশী।”

And the spell of poverty exercises equal influence over all castes ! hence, such exceptions should not be taken into account.

spirit of religious toleration among the educated Hindûs of Calcutta and its suburbs.”

Sir H. Risley in “Tribes and Castes of Bengal”.

“ইহাদের মধ্যে আঙ্গিরস, আলব্যাল, ধানেশী, কাশ্যপ, ভরদ্বাজ, কৌশিক, মৌদাল্য বা মধুকুল্য ও হংসল ইত্যাদি গোত্র আছে। * * উচ্চজাতির মত ইহাদের মধ্যেও বিবাহের বাঁধাবাঁধি নিয়ম আছে। সচরাচর ৫ হইতে ৯ বর্ষের মধ্যেই কস্তার বিবাহ হয়। বিধবার বিবাহ ঘটে না বা কেহ মনে করিলেই পতি পত্নী ত্যাগ করিতে পারে না, ইহারা কুশঙিকা ব্যতীত বিবাহের সকল অঙ্গই পালন করে। তবে সম্প্রদানই বিবাহের প্রধান অঙ্গ বলিয়া বিবেচিত হয়।

ইহাদের মধ্যে বৈষ্ণব, শাক্ত, সৌর ও গাণপত্য এই পঞ্চ সম্প্রদায়ভুক্ত লোকই পাওয়া যায়। রাঢ়ী ব্রাহ্মণেরাই ইহাদের পৌরোহিত্য করেন। তবে যিনি এই কার্য সম্পন্ন করেন, বিপুল রাঢ়ী ব্রাহ্মণেরা আর তাঁহার হাতে অল্পজল গ্রহণ করেন না। সাধারণতঃ রাঢ়ী শ্রেণীস্থ গোস্বামীরাই ইহাদের দীক্ষা দিয়া থাকেন।

Vide the Biswakosh.

We may add here that they have the Sándilya Gotra also.

Supported by the leading Pandits of Bhattapalli, the great seat of Sanskrit learning, Sjt. Pandit Hrishikesh Sástri, the late professor of Sanskrit in the Sanskrit College and the renowned editor of the Sanskrit journal the "Bidyodaya" writes :—"A careful investigation will prove that the Pods are employed as domestic servants,—male and maid—in the households of many qualified Brahmin Pandits versed in Sástras and living by the sacred Ganges, where they perform every household work with the purity of a good Sudra. No aboriginal races are ever allowed or authorised to do so—."*

In section 7 of the Regulation IV of 1809, the following are mentioned as low castes in Bengal, who are not permitted to enter the holy temple of Jaggarnáth in Puri ;—(1) Loli or Kashbi (2) Kalál or Sunri (3) Machhuá (4) Namasudra or Chandál (5) Ghuski (6) Ghazur (7) Bágdí (8) Jogi or Nurbuf (9) Káhár-Báruí and Dhuliá (10) Rájbandhi (11) Piráli (12) Chámár (13) Bhuinmáli and (14) Hári.†

* Vide 'Játibibeka' by late K. C. Hálder. (the translation is of the author).

† "Briefly the low castes are excluded from the temple

The same list is given in Regulation XI of 1810, except that the Pirális do not appear in it. This clearly shows that at no distant time, the Pods were not looked down upon in the society. Had they been in an inferior social position, the above list must have included them. The compilation of the revised list sufficiently speaks for the accuracy of facts and clearly explains that the name of the Pods was omitted from it,—not through any mistake, but as the result of a careful and unbiassed survey into the status of the caste.

The Pods find mention in the Bengali epic—“Sree Dharmamangal” of Ghanarám Chakravarti which dates back the 16th Century A.D. By way of describing the grandeur in the foundation of a capital town by the King Ichhái Ghosh,—the auther writes,—

“—করিয়া আসন, গাড়িল নিশান,

সম্মানে বসান পদ্য।

স্বধর্ম্ম-পণ্ডিত

বিধর্ম্ম-খণ্ডিত

ব্রাহ্মণ পণ্ডিত বৈদ্য ॥”

Here we find paying esteem to a caste entitled ‘Padya.’ Babu Jogendra Chandra Basu, of the

simply because they are unclean castes and not because they are not Hindus.”

—The Census Report for 1911, p. 229, para, 511.

well-known Bengali weekly, the 'Bangabási,' while editing the above epic, explained this 'Padya' as 'Pod.' This has also been corroborated by the renowned editor of the vernacular magazine,—the 'Prabási,' in a foot-note to an article entitled “*অর্থপৌরুষ*” or “the Aryan Poundrakas.”* It is possible that for the sake of rhyme the word 'Padyaráj' was abridged as 'Padya.' Thus we see the Pods. having enjoyed high social dignity as early as in the 16th century.†

* Vide 'Prabási'—Bhádra—1316.

† It may however seem inconsistent now-a-days when the term *chásá* (Cultivator) is in itself an abusive and contemptible word, that an agricultural people would be accorded such honour by a king;—but in ancient time, agriculture was regarded as a sacred and honourable profession which was taken to by almost all twice-born castes, *e.g.* “It need scarcely be stated that agriculture was practised by the primitive Aryans and it was the occupation which probably gave them their name (Arya—cultivator). Many words familiar to cultivators like the plough, the waggon, the cart, the wheel, the axle, the yoke, in common use among the Aryan nations,—point to the same primitive roots from which they have been derived.”

Vide “the Civilisation in Ancient India” by Mr. R. C. Dutt.

The peculiarities representing the lowness of birth, as laid down in Sástras, are not to be found in the Pods.

Manu says in his famous Institutes,—

(Chap. X, Slokas 57 and 58)

“বর্ণাপেতমবিজ্ঞাতং নরং কলুষযোনিজম্ ।
 আৰ্য্যরূপমনির্বাৰ্য্যং কৰ্ম্মভিঃ স্বেৰ্ভিভাবয়েৎ ॥
 অনাৰ্য্যতা নিষ্ঠুরতা ক্রুরতা নিজিয়াস্রতা ।
 পুরুষং ব্যঞ্জয়ন্তীহ লোকে কলুষযোনিজম্ ॥”

i.e. If a non-Aryan people issuing from low-caste parents,—and deviated from the particular rites to be observed by one of the four principal castes, passes for Aryan, his caste will be discerned from his manners and behaviours. In this world, lowness of caste is manifested in

Apart from the ancient age, it is noticeable that during the time of Ballál Sen, the great social reformer King of Bengal.—*i.e.*, in the 12th Century A. D. agriculture was esteemed as a high occupation to which the low castes were not entitled. The Kaibartas, who were originally boatmen, as a remuneration for their certain valuable services to the King Ballál Sen, were allowed to adopt agriculture. The following extract from “Ballál charita” by Ananda Bhatta will bear testimony to the fact :—

“ভতো স্তেভ্যো দদৌ রাজা সন্তোষবিমলাননঃ ।

ধনরত্নকাভরণান্ হালিক্যকোপজীবিকাম্ ॥”

non-Aryanism, cruelty, wickedness and dishonesty.*

Moreover, the great legislator points to a way for ascertaining the birth of a man, where suspicion arises,—

“पित्र्यां वा भजते शीलं मातुर्बोद्धमेव वा ।

न कथञ्चन दुर्योनिः प्रकृतिं स्वां निश्छति ॥

Manu,—Chap. X. Sloka, 59.

i.e. Every human being naturally inherits dispositions from his father or mother,—or commonly from the both combined. No one is ever capable of suppressing one's real birth.

So, the Pods, if issued from a low origin must have displayed this lowness in their daily habits and various actions; but as has been said before, their manners and customs in the society strictly resemble those of the good Sudras. Hence, it is clear that the Pods are not the descendants of the Pulindas or Mlechhas, nor are they the product of a hybrid mixture of castes.

* Cf :—যো যস্য বৃত্তিসম্বোগী স তজ্জাতি প্রকীৰ্ত্তিতঃ ।

Manu, Chap. IX.

“The lowest castes preserve the most primitive usages, just as the oldest geological formations contain the simplest forms of organic life.”

The People of India—p. 216.

Now, if the Pods do not spring from a Mlechha or Antyaja* origin, what are they? Do they belong to a pure or a mixed caste? Let us dwell on this as far as possible,—

The Pods were the Poundrakas sunken into the state of Sudras,—as referred to in the Sa'stras.

It has been stated that none of the terms 'Poundraka,' 'Padmaráj,' 'Padyaráj' 'Bálèa' nor 'Pod' find mention in Sástras in the tables of pure or mixed castes. Only 'Poundra' or 'Poundraka'—which name the Pods of Murshidabad go by, bears a meaning indicative of a caste. In the wellknown Sanskrit Dictionary, the 'Báchaspatya,' we find four different illustrative meanings of 'Poundra' of which one runs thus :—

“ক্রিয়ালোপেন বৃষলত্বপ্রাপ্তে ক্ষত্রিয়ভেদে প্রমাণং অত্র মনুঃ
বৃষলত্বং গতা ইতি ।”

* The lists of Antyaja or low mixed castes, as given in different Sástras, are as follows :—

“রজকশর্ম্মকায়শ নটো বরুড় এবচ ।

কৈবর্ত্ত-মেদ-ভিল্লাশ সপ্তৈতে চাস্ত্যজাঃ স্মৃতাঃ ॥

The Atri Sanhitá; Sk. 195.

“ * * * * *

বর্দ্ধকী নাপিতো গোপ আশাপঃ কুস্তকারকঃ ।

বগিক-কিরাত-কায়স্থ-মালাকার-কুটুম্বিনঃ ।

বরটো-মেদ-চণ্ডাল-দাস-বপচ-কোলকাঃ ॥

This meaning goes to imply a caste. We read in Sástras that the Poundras or Poundrakas,—a Kshattriya people fell to the state of Sudras, having lived long unministered by Brahmins.

Manu writes,—

“শনকৈস্ত ক্রিয়ালোপাদিমা ক্ষত্রিয়জাতয়ঃ ।

বৃষলত্বংগতা লোকে ব্রাহ্মণাদর্শনেনচ ॥

পৌণ্ড্রকাশোড়্রাভিড়াঃ কাষোজা যবনাঃশকাঃ ।

পারদাঃ পহ্লবাস্তীনাঃ কিরাতাঃ দরদাথশাঃ ॥

Chap. X, Slks.—43-44.

i e. “The Poundrakas, the Udras, the Dravidas, the Kámbojas, the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Páradas, the Pahlavas, the Chinas, the Kirátas and Khasas are all said to have been Kshattriyas before, but to have gradually sunk in the world to the condition of Sudras through omission of sacred rites, and for not consulting Brahmins.”*

According to Manu's annotator Kalluka Bhatta and Medhátithi, “Poundraka” primarily means a country and hence comes the secondary

এতেহস্ত্যজাঃ সমাখ্যাতা য়ে চান্যে চ গবাশনাঃ ।

এবাং সম্ভাষণাং স্নানং দর্শনাদর্কবীক্ষণম্ ॥ ”

The Vyása Sanhitá, Slks 10—12.

* cf. মেকলা ভ্রাবিড়া লাটাঃ পৌণ্ড্রাকোণ্ড্রিশ্রাস্তথা ।

শৌণ্ডিকা দরদা দার্বীশোরাঃ শবরা বর্বরাঃ ॥

কিরাতা যবনাস্টৈব তাস্তা ক্ষত্রিয়জাতয়ঃ ।

বৃষলত্বমুপ্রাপ্তা ব্রাহ্মণাণামমৰ্ষণাং ॥

The Mahábhárat, Anusásan Parba XXXV, 17-18.

meaning—"people inhabiting the country of Poundraka."

Modern historians say that the country of Poundraka or Poundra Desha extended to Anga or Bhagalpur on the west ;—to Banga (Dacca and Mymensing) on the east ; and on its northern boundary lay a part of Dinajpur, Maldah, Rajsahi, Murshidabad, Birbhum and a part of Burdwan.*

In Houen Tsang's account, Northern Bengal was identified as Poundra or Poundra Bardhan.

* Vide the Biswakosh. General Cunningham identifies the country with modern Pabna. Prof. Wilson said, "the greater part of the province (Poundra Vardhana) was to the north of the Ganges, including Gouda, Pabna etc."

"মালদহ হইতে ময়মনসিংহ পর্য্যন্ত সমস্ত প্রদেশ পৌণ্ড্র নামে কথিত হয়।" Vide "যশোহর খুলনার ইতিহাস" Vol. I. P. 7.

By Bábu Satish Chandra Chakravarti.

"মালদহ ও দিনাজপুর হইতে ময়মনসিংহ পর্য্যন্ত সমগ্র প্রদেশ পুণ্ড্র নামে কথিত হয়।" Bángálár Purábritta, P. 100.

cf :—উদগ্ৰীমবতঃ শৈলাদ্রুত্তরস্য দক্ষিণে।

পুণ্ড্র নাম সমাখ্যাৎ নগরং তত্র বৈশ্বতং ॥

The Brahmánda Purána.

Also,

প্রাগ্জ্যোতিষাশ্চ পৌণ্ড্রাশ্চ বিদেহান্ত্রালিপ্তকা।

শাল্ল-মাগধ-গোনর্দাঃ প্রাচ্যা জনপদাঃ স্মৃতাঃ ॥

The Matsya Purána, Chap. CXIV.

The country is said to have been in a very flourishing condition at that time.* The town of ancient Gour is also called Pánduá. The supposition that 'Poundra' was transformed into 'Pánduá' is not, too, unjustifiable.† The 'Brishala' or Brátya Poundras,‡ stated by Manu, had originally inhabited Poundra Desha. How—

* "The kingdom is described as 800 miles in circuit, and was thickly populated. The tanks and public offices and flourishing woods were regularly connected at intervals. The soil was flat and loamy, and rich in all kinds of grain produce. The bread fruit, though plentiful, was highly esteemed. There were about twenty Sangharams and 300 priests, and some hundred Deva-temples with sectaries of various schools,—"

Houen Tsang's account as reproduced in
"The Civilisation in Ancient India."

Vide also "প্রাচীন ভারত" by Bábu Rám Prán Gupta
P. 284.

† "পুণ্ড্রাঃ স্থাবরেন্দ্রো গোড় নীহুতিঃ।" Trikándasesha.

‡ Brishala or Brátya = Sunken to the state of Sudras.

"দ্বিজাতয়ঃ সৰ্বগাং জনয়ন্ত্য ব্রতাংস্তৃষাৎ।

তান্ সাবিত্রি-পরিব্রষ্টান্ ব্রাত্যা ইতি বিনির্দেশেৎ।

Manu, Chap. X, 20.

i.e. Children begotten of twice-born parents,—not initiated, and failing to recite the Gáyatri Mantra, are called Brátyas.

cf. — "অগ্নিকার্যাং পরিব্রষ্টাঃ সঙ্কোপাসনবর্জিতাঃ।

বেদকৈবানবীমানাঃ সৰ্বেষু বৃষলাঃ স্মৃতাঃ ॥"

The Parásar Sanhitá. Chap. III.

ever, we shall try to show below that the term 'Pod' is but a corruption of this 'Poundra'—owing to phonetic decay.

Some may urge that the rules of Prákrita Grammar do not admit of the change of 'Poundraka' into 'Pod,'—in as much as according to those the former can only be turned into 'Pounda-a' (পৌণ্ড-অ), 'Punda-a' (পুণ্ড-অ), Pungda (পুংড) and 'Punrah' (পুঁড়) in successive order, and not into 'Pod.'

Let us quote the solution of the above inconsistency from an able writing of Srijute Pandit Hrishikesh Sástri :—

“In the Vishnu Purána, we see Viswasfatika, a king of Magadha, expelled the Poundras from their own country ;—who, on their expulsion, chose their abode in Rárhah and other places. It is often found that men migrating from another country are generally distinguished after the name of their original country, just as an inhabitant of Bengal,—no matter of any caste, is recognised as Bángáli (বঙ্গালী) in the Upcountries,—an Afgan as Kábuli in Bengal and so on. Similarly the people of Poundra Desha, as foreigners, got the title of “Poundraka” in their new settlement after the name of their original home. In

course of time, with the expansion of their population, they gradually began to get scattered in the distant localities,—where their name ‘Poundraka’ became mispronounced as Poundaraka (পৌণ্ডরক), Poundarika (পৌণ্ডরীক) and in like manner ‘Pundarika’ (পুণ্ডরীক). Every one is aware of the fact that an imported word often suffers changes on account of the peculiar way of pronunciation of the local people. As for example, the word ‘English’ is made ‘Ingrej’ (ইঙ্গরেজ) in Bengali, and ‘Aungrej’ ‘অঙ্গরেজ’ in the Upcountries, ‘Box’ is ‘Bákṣa’ (বাক্স) in Bengali ; ‘Básko’ (বাস্কো) in Hindustani ;—Return—Returan (রিটারন্)—Retine (রিটাইন) etc. It will be also marked that attempts are often made to convert a foreign word into the shape of a native one where it becomes practicable. With this object in view, the Bengalees have made Maxmullar—Mokshamullár (মোক্শমুল্লার), Rahim Box—Rám Box (রাম-বাক্স),—Petharam—Prithárám (পৃথারাম) and the like. Thus the word ‘Pundarika’ (পুণ্ডরীক) being more convenient and more easily expressive of a meaning than ‘Poundraka,’ ‘Poundaraka’ or ‘Poundarika,’ the people of their new abode began to call the Poundras by the name of ‘Pundarika’. After lapse of time, multiplied in number or subject to similar other causes, the Pundarikas—

as they were now called—again flocked to a new region,* where the local populace chose and replaced 'Padma' (পদ্ম) for 'Pundarika',† as the former seemed easier to pronounce and sweet to the ear. Not only this,—the word 'Padma' once became much favourite with the Bengalees,—as we then see them selecting most of their names, connected with 'Padma'—such as 'Padmalochan', —'Padmanáva' 'Padmamukhi' etc. It might be that the Poundras or Poundrakas,—turned into the Pundarikas in the aforesaid way,—came to Bengal at that time,—owing to which they were to have their name 'Pundarika' changed as 'Padma'. However, as it is not preferable to call a people simply by the name of 'Padma',—the word 'Ráj' (রাজ) was affixed to it;‡ this

* The "Kulatantra" supports the migration of the Poundras in the following passages :—

“অনৌহি ব্রাত্যক্ষত্রিয় ক্রমাদেশান্তরং গতঃ ।

রাঢ়ে বঙ্গে ক্রমেণৈব দক্ষিণে রাঢ় এবচ ॥

ওড্ৰেচ স্থানভেদেতু ভিন্নাখ্যঃ পরিকীৰ্ত্তিতে ।

এতেষাঞ্চ সূতা য়ে য়ে তেহপি তদ্দেশসংজ্ঞকাঃ ॥

† 'Padma' is a synonym for 'Pundarika'.

‡ The word 'Padmaráj',—which has been long considered as a polite substitution for 'Pod' and still holds its

'Padma' in a somewhat contracted and distorted form has been transformed into its present shape 'Pod' (পোদ) for the sake of colloquialism.

ground for the same purpose,—also implies 'Poundra Kshattriya' :—

“পৌণ্ডরাজো অনেকরে পৌণ্ড সংজ্ঞকনীযতাম্ ।
পদ্মরাজাখ্যরাজস্তে তিলকধৃতিধারিণী ॥”

“Koshárnabachintámani” as cited
in “Rahasyabibeka”.

N. B.—Kabiswar Sreemanta Vidyá Bhusan Kábyirtha, Sidhántabágish says that 'Pod' was not the corruption of 'Poundra', but itself is a Sanskrit word bearing the meaning expressive of the Poundra Kshattriyas. Some of his able analyses of the word are reproduced below :—

1. পোদঃ (প + উন্ + কঃ) = ত্রাত্যক্ষত্রিয়ঃ ।

পকারঃ ক্ষত্রবাচকস্তস্মাদ্ভূনতি যো জনঃ ।

স পোদ ইতি বিজ্ঞেয়ঃ ক্ষত্রাদ্রৌভাবকো মতঃ ॥

2. পঃ = রক্ষকঃ, প্রভুঃ ; লক্ষণয়া আদিপুরুষঃ ।

উঃ = শিবঃ, শঙ্করঃ । দা = শোধনং, পবিত্রতা ।

উন দা যন্ত স উদঃ = চলঃ । শঙ্করেণ ললাটদেশেধৃতত্বাৎ পবিত্রতা শশিনো
ভবতি । যোগরূঢ়েন পদমেতৎ সিধ্যতি পঃ উদঃ যন্ত স পোদঃ চলবংশীয় ক্ষত্রঃ ।
লক্ষণায়ৈতদর্থং সমাগমো ভবেদिति ।

3. পঃ = রক্ষাকর্তা, রক্ষকঃ । উঃ = মহেশ্বরঃ ।

দা = শোধনং, পবিত্রতা । দঃ = পালকঃ, লক্ষণয়া আদিপুরুষঃ ।

পঃ উঃ যন্ত স পোঃ = চলঃ ;—তেন তদ্বংশজন্মনা দঃ শুদ্ধঃ যঃ স পোদঃ ।

অথবা তদ্বংশজন্মনা দা পবিত্রতা যন্ত স পোদঃ ; কিম্বা পোঃ দঃ আদিপুরুষঃ
যন্ত স পোদঃ = চলবংশসম্ভূত ক্ষত্রিয়জাতিবিশেষঃ । etc., etc.

The learned Pandit no doubt deserves great credit in tracing out such root meanings of 'Pod';—but the author has 'great doubt in the view other than that it is a mere contraction of 'Poundra'.

Because, 'Padma' is pronounced as 'Padda' (পদ্দ) in Bengali,—and the Bengalees, in many instances, are apt to pronounce the উপাস্ত্য or penultimate অকার as 'ও' ; as for example, they utter 'Bana' (বন) as 'Bôn' (বোন), 'Mana' (মন)—'Môn' (মোন) etc., and so 'Padda' was rendered 'Pod' by way of pronunciation. Not only did they convert 'Padda' into 'Pod', but even turned 'Padmamukhi' (পদ্মমুখী) to 'Podi' (পোদী). Now it goes without saying that this change of 'Padmamukhi' into 'Podi' will suffice to account for that of 'Padma' to 'Pod'—"*

The foregoing thoughtful observation by the venerable Pandit shows that the word 'Pod' is a corruption of 'Poundra'. Práchyavidyá-mahárnaba Srijute Nagendra Náth Basu mentions 'পৌত্রক' as a mispronounced form of 'Poundraka' in an article in the famous historical journal—"Oitihásik-chitra" ; this 'পৌত্রক' may change into 'পোদ' (Pod). Late Rái Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Báhádur,—the great Bengali scholar, wrote, in a chapter on the origin of the Bengalees, that 'Pod' had been derived from 'Poundra'. Bábu Paresh Náth

* Vide 'Játibibeka' by late Káilás Chandra Hálder. (The translation is of the author).

Banerjee, M.A., in his famous production—‘Bángálár Purábritta’—(the antiquities of Bengal) refers Pod to the Poundra origin. This view finds confirmation in the recently published renowned Bengali Dictionary—“Bángálá Sabda-kosha”—compiled by Prof. Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyánidhi, M.A. A number of more authorities may be cited in support of this.*

* In the ‘Biswakosha’—Bábu Nagendra Náth Bose writes that the Pods appear to have had their origin from the ‘Supundrakas’ (সুপুণ্ড্রক) referred to in the Mahá-bhárat;—at the same time, he supposes that the ‘Supundrakas’ were non-Aryans, as the latter are mentioned along with the ‘Ságarikás’ (সাগরিকা) etc., and also for the fact that their entrance to the place of sacrifice was not allowed by the door-keepers,—in support of which he quotes :—

“বঙ্গাঃ কলিঙ্গমাগধান্ত্রালিপ্তাঃ সুপুণ্ড্রকাঃ ।
 দৌবালিকাঃ সাগরিকাঃ পত্রোর্গাঃ শৈশবাস্তথা ॥
 কর্ণপ্রাবরণাশ্চৈব বহুবন্তত্র ভারত ।
 তত্রস্থা দ্বারপালৈস্তে প্রোচ্যন্তে রাজশাসনাং ॥
 কৃতকালোঃ স্তবলয়ন্ততো দ্বারমবপ্যথ ॥”

Saváparba—Chap. LII, Slks. 18-19.

Without going to test the reasonableness of the Pods’ connection with the Supundrakas, we should say that the view is too weak to require explanation. The Bangas and Kalingas were admittedly Kshátriyas as even the verses just preceeding the above extract will show :—

গৌণ্ডকাঃ কুরুরাশ্চৈব শকাশ্চৈব বিশাম্পতে ।
 অঙ্গা বঙ্গাশ্চ পুণ্ড্রাশ্চ শাণবত্যা গয়াস্তথা ॥

Now, we have to face a confusion arising out of the multitude of Poundras found in the Sástras ;—which tell us of two different kinds of Poundras, one—the Aryan and the other—the non-Aryan.

There are different Poundras mentioned in the Sa'stras.

सूजातयः श्रेणिमन्तुः श्रेयांसः शत्रुधारिणः ।

आहार्यं कर्त्त्रिणं विभक्तं शतशोऽज्ञातं शत्रवे ॥

Saváparba, Chap. LII, Slks. 16-17.

This shows that the Bangas were good Kshattriyas. Then, what accounts for their being mentioned with the 'Ságarikás' etc. ? We think the Ságarikás were not non-Aryans as stated. It is clear from the context that the Kshattriyas mentioned in Slokas 16-17, procured riches for Yudhisthira,—in consequence of which no obstacle might have stood in the way of their admission into the place of sacrifice,—though the passages speak nothing of their admission or non-admission ;—but the Kshattriyas in the Slokas 18-19, *i. e.*, the Supundrakas etc., appear to have done no services whatever to Yudhisthira, for which their entrance to the place of sacrifice was withheld. We understand that they were subsequently allowed admission each on presenting "a thousand mountain-like, well-trained and well-armoured elephants" :—

e. g. "दशदशान् हेमकङ्कान् पद्मवर्णान् कुशवृत्तान् ।

शैलभान् नित्यमन्तान् चाप्यभितः काम्यकं सरः ॥

दद्वैकैको दशशतान् कुञ्जरान् कवचावृत्तान् ।

कम्बवन्तः कुलीनाश्च द्वारेण प्रविशन्तुदा ॥"

Saváparba—Slks. 20-21, Ch. LII.

The verses quoted also say that the Supundrakas etc.,

**The non-Aryan
Poundras.**

The non-Aryan Poundras find
mentions in the following :—

“এতেহক্ৰাঃ পুণ্ড্রাঃ শবরাঃ পুলিন্দা মুতিবা ইত্যদস্তা ।
বহুবোভবন্তি বৈশ্বামিত্রা দম্বানাং ভূয়িষ্ঠা ॥

The Aitareya Bráhmaṇ.

“পৌণ্ড্রাঃ পুলিন্দা রমঠাঃ কাশ্বোজাশ্চৈব সৰ্ব্বশঃ ।

* * * *

মদ্বিধৈশ্চ কথং স্থাপ্যাঃ সৰ্ব্বে বৈ দম্ব্যজীবিনঃ ॥”

The Mahábhárat—Sántiparba Chap. LXV.

“পৌণ্ড্রান্ কিরাতান্ যবনান্ সিংহলান্ বৰ্করান্ খসান্ ।

চিবুকাচ্চ পুলিন্দাশ্চ চীনান্ হুনান্ সকেৱলান্ ॥

সসৰ্জ্জ ফেণতঃ সা গৌ শ্লেচ্ছান্ বহুবিধানপি ॥”

Ibid. Adiparba-Chap. CLXXVI.

কিরাতহুনান্ যবনান্ পৌণ্ড্রান্ কঙ্কান্ খসান্ শকান্ ।

অব্রহ্মণ্য নৃপাংশ্চাহন শ্লেচ্ছান্ দ্বিগ্বিজয়েৎখিলান্ ॥

Sreemadbhágбата—9-20-18.*

were forgiving and noble in descent (“কমাবন্তঃ কুলীনশ্চ”). These adjectives are no doubt inapplicable to the non-Aryans.

* One of the verses quoted shows that the sons of Biswámitra were Dassys or non-Aryan,—as according to legend they were so turned having fallen prey to the wrath and curse of their father Biswámitra. If Aryanism or non-Aryanism is only relative to blood or descent, then how is it possible that the descendants of the Aryan sage Biswámitra would be classed as non-Aryans? Then again,—in another verse of the quotations—some castes are said to have been created from certain limbs, saliva,

The above Poundras were admittedly the inhabitants of the Deccan,—as their name is found associated with the Andhras, the Sabaras and the Pulindas etc., who exclusively lived in Southern India. In the Márkendeya Purána (57), Vishnu Purána (2-3-15)* and Rámáyana we find the existence of a class of people in the Deccan by the name of Poundra. In the Rámáyana (Kiskindhákánda Chap. XXXIX) we find

urine etc. of a cow! What can we call it other than a myth? Many sections of people were treated in like manner, by the writers of the Sástras, who were actuated by the selfish idea of sealing the fates of those sections under eternal subjection by the introduction of the so-called concocted accounts on their caste-origins, as the compilers of the Sástras appear to have planned to hold their post as the ambitious castes for ever.

The meaning of the second verse, with reference to the context, in no way implies any connection of the Poundras etc., with the Dassys. In quoting this, I have only followed the views of some notable students of social history. However, apart from those vague theories on the origin, it is inferable from the verses quoted—that there existed a class of people known as the non-Aryan Poundras.

* “পুণ্ড্রাঃ কেরলাশ্চৈব গোলাঙ্গুলা শুথৈবচ ।”

The Márkendeya Purána, LVII.

“পুণ্ড্রাঃ কলিঙ্গা মগধা দাক্ষিণাত্যাশ্চ সর্বশঃ ।”

The Vishnu Purána, 2-3-15.

that Sugriba—when deputing Angada, Susena, Jámbubána and others in search for Sitá towards the Southern region—told them to conduct their searches in Pundra, Kerala, Chedi etc.—situated in the province of Godaveri on the South. This proves the existence of a kingdom Pundra in the Deccan. The Brahmabaibarta Purána (Chap. X Sk. 109) and Mahábhárata also inform us of a non-Aryan Pundra inhabiting Bengal.

The Aryan Poundras are mentioned in the **The Aryan Poundras.** Mahábhárat, Sreemadbhágata, Haribansha, Manusanhita, Matsya Purána, Kulatantra, etc.

Now, the question arises—which Poundras can the Pods trace their origin to?

In “Kulatantra,”—the Aryan Poundras have been defined as,—

“দাতাবলী হিতেরতঃ স্মৃনা দেবসেবকঃ ।

কৃষিকর্ষোপজীবী চ ষড়্বিধং পৌণ্ড্র লক্ষণং ॥”

i.e., An Aryan Pundra is to be charitable, physically strong, benevolent, worshipping the Devas and living by cultivation.

These six characteristics of a Pundra are surely found existing in the Pods.

Also, we find in “Kulatantra,”—

“দক্ষিণোত্তর রাঢ়ীয়ো বঙ্গজশ্চোড়্র এবহি ।

শ্রেণীচতুষ্টয়স্থেতে পৌণ্ড্র জাতি সমুচ্যতে ॥”

i.e., The Poundras have four sub-sections, namely, the Southern Ráhrese, the Northern Ráhrese, Bengalee and Uria.* As for example, those of the 24-Parganahs, Khulna, Jessore, Hughly and Howrah are generally distinguished as the Bángálee Pods, and those of Midnapore as the Uriá Pods. The Ráhrese section of the Pods appears to exist in Birbhum, Maldah, Murshidabad, Rajsahi etc., where they are called the Punros (পুঁড়ো) and Pundras (পুণ্ড্র).†

Moreover, the title 'Balái' (বলাই) which the

The appellation "Bala'i" of the Midnapore Pods is a colloquial form of "Ba'lea"—which implies the Poundra Kshatriyas.

Midnapore Pods generally go by, is but a provincial or colloquial form of 'Bálea' (বালের), which, too, implies the Aryan Poundras. Because, there is in the Haribansha,—

* “এদেশীয় পোদের মধ্যে উত্তর রাঢ়ীয়, দক্ষিণ রাঢ়ীয়, বঙ্গজ ও উড়ু এই চারিটি শ্রেণী * * * দেখা যায়।”

The Biswakosh—the word 'Pod,' p. 217.

† Mr. Risley's "Tribes and Castes of Bengal" and the "Biswakosh" appear to include them with the Pods, when those say of the latter's existence in Murshidabad and Maldah. Mr. Gait observes that the Pods and Pundras are the same. The author of 'Játibibeka' says that the Pods of Murshidabad still call themselves "Poundras." In the Census Reports, the Punros or Pundras are enumerated as different from the Pods.

“ফেণাতু সূতপাঃ জজ্ঞে সূতঃ সূতপসো বলিঃ ।
 জাতো মানুষ্যোনৌতু স রাজা কাঞ্চনে সূধীঃ ॥
 মহাযোগী স তু বলিবভূব নৃপতি পুরা ।
 পুত্রানুৎপাদয়ামাস পঞ্চবংশকরান্ ভুবি ॥
 অঙ্গঃ প্রথমতো জজ্ঞে বঙ্গঃ সূক্ষ্মশুঠৈবচ ।
 পুণ্ড্র কলিঙ্গশ্চ তথা বালৈয়ং ক্ষত্রমুচ্যতে ॥
 বালৈয়া ব্রাহ্মণাশ্চৈব তস্ত্র বংশকরা ভুবি ॥”

Chap. XXXI, Slokas, 33-35.

i.e. Sutapá was the son of the king Fen of the Lunar dynasty. His son was Bali. Of all the kings Bali used golden arrows in wars. He practised *Yoga* and turned ‘Maháyogi’ (great ascetic). He had five sons who founded five different dynasties after their respective names. Anga was the eldest ; next to him were born Banga, Suhma, Pundra and Kalinga in succession. Kshattriyas issued from those five dynasties are termed the Bálea Kshattriyas.*

* Similar instances justifying the name ‘Bálea’ of the Poundras, can be cited from the Garurh, Vishnu, Matsya and Agni Puránas :—

“বলিসূতপসো জজ্ঞে অঙ্গবঙ্গকলিঙ্গকাঃ ।

সূক্ষ্মপৌণ্ড্রাশ্চ বালৈয়া অনপানন্তথাঙ্গতঃ ॥

The Garurh Purána, Purbakhanda,

Chap. CXLIII, Slk. 71.

Of the Báleas, Pundra was the predecessor of the Aryan Poundras. The Poundras were otherwise called the Báleas, as the latter denotes in general all the sons of Bali. In the district of Midnapore, the Pods, for a very long time,—how long it is not known,—had been designating themselves as the Baláis (বলাই), which numerous

“হেমাং হতপান্ত্রাৱলিৰ্ষন্ত ক্ষেত্রে দীৰ্ঘতমসা ।

অঙ্গবঙ্গকলিঙ্গাচ্চাঃ স্কন্ধপুণ্ড্রসংজিতা ॥”

“হেমাং হতপাঃ তস্মাৱলিঃ যন্ত ক্ষেত্রে দীৰ্ঘতমসা অঙ্গবঙ্গকলিঙ্গস্কন্ধপুণ্ড্রাথ্য
বালেয়ং ক্ষত্ৰমজন্তত । তন্নামসন্ততিসংজ্ঞাশ্চ পঞ্চবিষয়াবত্ৰ ॥”

The Vishnu Purána, 9-23-4 and

Part IV, Chap. XVIII.

দেনন্ত হতপাঙ্গজ্ঞে হতপন্তনয়ো বলিঃ ।

জাতো মানুষযোছাস্ত স্ত্রীণে বংশে ঐজ্ঞেচ্ছয়া ॥

মহাযোগী তু স বলিবদ্ধো বকৈর্মহাস্মনা ।

পুত্রানুংপাদয়ামাস ক্ষেত্ৰজান্ পঞ্চপাৰ্শ্বিকান্ ॥

অঙ্গং স জনয়ামাস বঙ্গং স্কন্ধং তথৈবচ ।

পুণ্ড্রং কলিঙ্গক তথা বালেয়ং ক্ষত্ৰমুচ্যতে ॥

* * * *

তেষাঞ্চ পঞ্চদায়াদাবঙ্গাচ্চাঃ স্কন্ধকন্তথা ।

পুণ্ড্রাঃ কলিঙ্গাশ্চ তথা অঙ্গন্ত তু নিবোধত ॥

The Matsya Purána, Chap. XLVIII,

Slks. 23-26 and 29.

“ঋষদ্রথাদভূং পৈলঃ পৈলাচ্চ হতপাঃ হতঃ ॥

মহাযোগী বলিস্তস্মাদঙ্গো বঙ্গ

পুণ্ড্রঃ কলিঙ্গো বালেয়ো বলিযোগী বলাদ্বিতঃ ॥

The Agni Purána, Chap. CCLXXVII,

Slks. 10-11.

old records and documents in existence will still testify.* It is only a few years since they have ceased making themselves known by that name,

Cf. also in the Mahábhárat :—

বলিঃ হৃদেষ্ণাং ভাৰ্য্যাং স্বাং তস্মৈ তাং প্রাহিণোংপুনঃ ।

তাং স দীৰ্ঘতমাস্তেষ্ণু স্পৃষ্ট্বা দেবী যথাত্রবীং ॥

ভবিষ্যন্তি কুমারাস্তে তেজসাদিত্যবর্চসঃ ।

অস্মৈ বঙ্গঃ কলিঙ্গশ্চ পুণ্ড্রহৃক্ষশ্চ তে স্মৃতাঃ ।

তেষাং দেশাঃ সমাখ্যাতাঃ স্মনামকথিতাভুবি ॥

অঙ্গনাস্তেঃভবদেশে বঙ্গোবঙ্গাস্ত চ স্মৃতঃ ।

কলিঙ্গবিষয়শ্চৈব কলিঙ্গস্ত চ স স্মৃতঃ ॥

পুণ্ড্রস্ত পুণ্ড্রাঃ প্রখ্যাতাঃ হৃক্ষাঃ হৃক্ষস্ত চ স্মৃতাঃ ।

এবং বলৈঃ পুরাবংশঃ প্রখ্যাতো বৈ মহাবিজঃ ॥

A'diparba, Chap. CIV, Slks. 51-55.

N. B.—These Poundras were certainly different from the non-Aryan Poundras of the Deccan referred to above. We see that Dusmanta's son Bharat, who came of the same ancestor Puru, from whom Pundra descended, was far above the latter in the line of ascent. (Vide পৃথিবীর ইতিহাস by Sj. Durgá Dás Láhiri, Part I. Geneological trees of the Lunar dynasty according to the Puránas, pp. 307-329). Now, Bharat, who flourished long—long before Pundra, is said to have conquered the non-Aryan Poundras of the Deccan. Hence, it is clear that the non-Aryan Poundras had existed long before the Aryan Poundras and should not be confounded with the latter.

* Vide the Census Report for 1872, in which the Midnapore Pods are registered as Baláis, and also Mr. Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal, Midnapore Vol. p. 50, in which the term 'Balái' occurs for the agricultural Pods.

which in Hindu society implies a sort of reflection on the caste-status of the person called by it,—and adopted the appellation *Brátya Kshattriya* after a unanimous resolution of their community in Bengal. Our inference that the Pods had been the Aryan Poundras is greatly supported by the application of the term “Balái.” Now, we can say that we have arrived at the clear conclusion that the Pods descended from the Bálea or Poundra Kshattriyas ; the old *Poundra* and *Bálea* being respectively identified with the modern *Pod* and *Balái*. The very Aryan blood which animated the Bálea or Poundra Kshattriyas, still unadulteratedly runs in the veins of their descendants,—the Pods.

In the Haribansha and Matsya Purána we see instance of a king—named **Basudeb's son Pundra.** Pundra, who, according to some, was the ancestor of the Poundras. But so far as his account is concerned, he is said to have left no issues whatever,—calculated to found a lineage.

e.g. স্মতনুশ্চ নারাজী চ শৌরে রাস্তাং পরিগ্রহৌ ।
 পৌণ্ড্রশ্চ কপিলশ্চৈব বসুদেবস্ত তৌ স্মৃতৌ ॥
 নারাজ্যাং কপিলো জজ্ঞে পৌণ্ড্রশ্চ স্মতনু-স্মতঃ ।
 তস্মান্নপৌহভবৎ পৌণ্ড্রঃ কপিলশ্চ বনং যযৌ ॥

The Haribansha, Chap. CLX.

স্বতনূরথরাজী চ শৌরে রাস্তাং পরিগ্রহৌ ।

পুণ্ড্রশ্চকপিলশৈব বসুদেবায়জৌ বরৌ ॥

জরানাম নিষাদোহভূৎ প্রথমঃ স ধনুর্ধরঃ ।

The Matsya Purána, Chap. XLVI,

Slk. 27.

The above tell us that Basudeb, the son of Sura, (this Basudeb was the father of Lord Sreekrishna) had a son Pundra from the mother Sutanu, who became the king. In a previous chapter of the Haribansha (chap. XXXV) we find that Sutanu had been one of the servant-maids who bore several children of Basudeb. If the view that this Pundra was the originator of the Poundras has any truth underlying it, it may not be unreasonable to infer that he was the begetter of the non-Aryan Poundras of Bengal just as Biswámitra was of those of the Deccan (এতেহন্ধ্রাঃ পুণ্ড্রাঃ * * * বৈষ্ণামিত্রাঃ দক্ষ্যনাং ভূমিষ্ঠা। *The Aitareya Bráhmaṇ*), apart from the myth that the non-Aryan Poundras were begotten of the heavenly cow—Suravi of Basistha (Mbht. Adi Parba). This view finds support in the Matsya Purána, in which we see that the elder brother of these issues of Basudeb was Jará—a Nishád or admitted non-Aryan.

The non-Aryan Poundras of Bengal exist in the form of the inadmissible the present descendants of the non-Aryan Poundras of Bengal. mixed castes, the fishing Pods, who stand on a quite different level from the cultivating Pods,* —whose origin, tradition and occupation are quite peculiar. The Hindu society of Bengal contains many such two different castes in a common name. There are the unholy mixed-blooded Káyasthas living on the art of painting and the unclean Karanas following the professions of Pálki-bearers and boat-men.† They

* "The Pods are divided into higher class, who live by cultivation and call themselves Padmaraj or Bratya Kshattriya, and the fishing Pods."

The Census Report for 1901, Vol. VI p. 372.

N.B. On enquiry into the whereabouts of the fishing Pods, the author has been kindly informed by the Post master of Pánduá, District Hughly, that they live in the village of Sreepálá near Pánduá, and quite unlike the cultivating pods, retail fishes in the markets and have not the least connection with the latter. The Census authorities have made an error by confounding the cultivating Pods with the fishing Pods by false analogy. They should have distinguished them as a separate caste just as the cultivating and the fishing Kaibarttas are dealt with.

† "মাহিষ্যবণিতান্ধুর্বেদেহাদ যঃ প্রসূয়তে ।

স কারস ইতি প্রোক্ত স্তম্ভ ধর্মো বিধীয়তে ॥"

The Sudradharmatatva by Kamalákar Bhatta.

have not the least connection with the Aryan Káyasthas or Karanas—except in mere name.

It is shown above that the Pods living by cultivation belong to the Aryan Poundras. Now it remains to be explained what led to their present social inferiority, which is in some way incompatible with their high Kshattric origin.

In the Sreemadbhágbat, we find that on Kárta-
Parasura'ma's attempt to extir- birjárjuna's oppression on Renu-
pate the Kshat- ká, her son Parasuráma took the
triyas,—a cause vow of totally extirpating the
of the Poundras' Kshattriyas twenty one times
present social in- in succession,—as the culprit
feriority. belonged to a Kshattriya clan.* Many Kshattriyas

Cf:—"The Káyasthas are also of Aryan blood, except the menial and cultivating classes (Bhándáries, etc.), who call themselves Káyasthas, but are generally known as Sudras." Vide R. C. Dutt's "A History of Civilisation in Ancient India." Chap. II, p. 172.

* "ত্রিঃসপ্তকুতো রেণুকরা দুঃখাবেশাং উদরস্তাড়নং কৃতম্। ততোরাশস্তাবং
 কৃতঃ ক্ষত্রমুংসাদিতবানিতি প্রসিদ্ধিঃ।"

The Sreemadbhágbat,—
Sreedhar Swámi's Commentaries,
Skandha IX, Chap. XIII, Siks. 19-23.

It is also found in the Vishnu Purána that subsequently many survivors of the Kshattriyas fell pray to the oppressions by their kings, which, too, might have led to their escape,—

escaped the wrath of Parasuráma by taking refuge in the hills and forests lying beyond the range of the Brahmin's formidable axe. Some Kshattriyas fled to other countries where they began to live in disguise of Sudras, having given up sacred threads.

মহানলিহুতঃ শূদ্রাগর্ভোদ্ভবোহতিলুকো মহাপদ্মনন্দঃ পরশুরাম ইব
পরোহিতিল ক্ষত্রাস্তকারী ভবিতা। ততঃ প্রভৃতি শূদ্রাঃ ভূপালাভবিষ্যন্তি।
নচৈব একচ্ছত্রো মনুলজ্জিতশাসনো মহাপদ্মঃ পৃথিবীং ভোক্ষ্যতি।

Part IV. Chap. XXIV, Paras 4 & 5.

“মাগধীয়ো বিশ্বক্ষটিকসংজ্ঞোহন্যান্ করিষ্যতি কৈবৰ্ত্তকড় পুলিন্দব্রাহ্মণান্
রাজ্যে স্থাপয়িষ্যত্যাংসাদ্ভাখিল ক্ষত্রজাতিম্।”

Ibid.

Cf : —in the Bhágabat Purána :—

“মহানলিহুতো রাজন্ শূদ্রাগর্ভোদ্ভবো বলী।

মহাপদ্মপতি কশ্চিন্নন্দঃ ক্ষত্র বিনাশকৃৎ ॥

ততো নৃপাভবিষ্যন্তি শূদ্রপ্রায়স্বধার্মিকঃ।

Skandha XII. Chap. I. Slk. 8.

Also—in the Matsya Purána—

মহানলি হুতস্তাপি শূদ্রায়াং কলিকাংশজঃ।

উৎপৎস্রতে মহাপদ্মঃ সৰ্ব্বক্ষত্রাস্তকো নৃপঃ ॥

ততঃ প্রভৃতি রাজানো—ভবিষ্যাঃ শূদ্রঘোনয়ঃ।

একরাট্ স মহাপদ্মঃ একচ্ছত্রো ভবিষ্যতি ॥

অষ্টাশীতি তু বর্ধাণি পৃথিব্যাঞ্চ ভবিষ্যতি।

সৰ্ব্বক্ষত্রমথোংসাদ্ভা ভাবিনার্থেন চোদিতঃ ॥

Chap. CCLXXII. Slks. 17-19.

It is stated in the Mahábhárat, Aswamedh Parba, Chap. XXIX that,—

“ততস্ত ক্সত্রিয়া কেচিচ্ছামদগ্ন্যভয়াদিতাঃ ।
 বিবিশুর্গিরিভূগানি মৃগাঃ সিংহাদিতা ইব ॥
 তেষাং স্ববিহিতং কৰ্ম তদভয়ান্নানুতিষ্ঠতাম্ ।
 প্রজা বৃষলতাং গতা ব্রাহ্মণাণামদর্শনাৎ ॥
 এবং তে দ্রাবিড়াভীরাঃ পুণ্ড্রাশ্চ শবরৈঃ সহ ।
 বৃষলত্বং পরিগতা ব্যুথানাং ক্ষত্রধর্মিনঃ ॥”

Slks. 14—16.

i. e. Afterwards, some Kshattriyas, afraid of Parasuráma, took refuge in caverns like so many deer chased by a lion. The Kshattriyas gradually omitted to observe their sacred rites for fear of Parasuráma, and their progeny succumbed to the state of Sudras. Thus the Dravidas, the Aviras and the Poundras, together with the Sabaras, sank into the condition of Sudras for not consulting Brahmins and through omission of the particular rites of the Kshattriyas.*

* “জামদগ্ন্যভয়েন ক্ষাত্রধর্মং পরিত্যজেৎ ।

কৃষিকর্মাদি কার্যঞ্চ কুত্বা শূদ্রবদাচরেৎ ॥

* * * *

পৌণ্ড্রাদি হি দৃশ্যতে সাবিত্রিপতিতঃ পৃথো ॥”

The Parasuráma Sanhitá.

The above Poundras, as the Mahábhárat says, were good-blooded Aryans and practised the true religion.*

To avoid Parasuráma's vowed extermination, the Poundras made good their escape to Banga or the modern Eastern Bengal,†—where they began to live as Sudras without

Bengal,—an unholy place for the Aryans in early times.

“এবং হত্বার্জুনং রামঃ সন্ধায় নিশিতান্ শরান্ ।
এক-এব যযৌহন্তঃ সর্বানৈবাতুরান্ নৃপান্ ॥
কেচিদগহনমাশ্রিত্য কেচিৎ পাতালমাবিশন্ ॥”

The Skanda Purána,
Renuká Mähátmya Chap. XLVII.

“শুণু কৌন্তেয় রামস্ত প্রভাবো যো ময়া শ্রুতঃ ।
মহর্ষিনাং কথয়তাং বিক্রমঃ তস্ত জন্মচ ॥
যথ্যচ জামদগ্ন্যেন কোটিশঃ ক্ষত্রিয়া হতাঃ ।
উদ্ধৃতা রাজবংশেষু যে ত্রয়া ভারতে হতাঃ ॥”

The Mahábhárat,
Sánti Parba, Chap. XLI.

* “অঙ্গা বঙ্গাশ্চ পুণ্ড্রাশ্চ শাণ্ডবত্যা গয়াস্তথা ।
সুজাতয়ঃ শ্রেণিমন্তঃ শ্রেয়াংসঃ শস্ত্রধারিণঃ ॥”

Saváparba, Chap. LII. Sk. 16.

“করবঃ সহপাঞ্চালাঃ শাব্বা মন্ত্রাঃ সনৈমিষাঃ ।
কোশলা কাশপৌণ্ড্রাশ্চ কালিন্ধ্রা মাগধাস্তথা ॥
চেদয়শ্চ মহাভাগা ধর্ম্মং জ্ঞানন্তি শাস্ততম্ ॥”

Karnaparba, Chap. XLV. Sk. 14-15.

† Bábu Paresh Náth Bannerjee M.A., the author of *Bángálar Purábritta* (বাঙ্গালার পুরাবৃত্ত) says that at the time of the Mahábhárat, ‘Banga’ implied Murshidabad, Birbhum,

the ministration of priests—as the place was not regarded as sacred,—because the Aryan civilisation had not, at this time, planted its banner on the soil of the province. In the Rationalistic Age, in Baudháyana's time, the zone of Brahmanical civilisation had not extended so far as Bengal. According to him, a person travelling in this place was to expiate the sin by offering the Punastoma or Sarba Pristha sacrifice. Manu, who is subsequent to the time of Sutra literature, tells us,—

“অঙ্গবঙ্গকলিঙ্গেষু সৌরাষ্ট্রমগধেষুচ ।
তীর্থষাত্রাং বিনা গচ্ছন্ পুনঃসংস্কারমহঁতি ॥”

i. e. Men should go to Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Sourashtra and Magadh only on pilgrimage ;—otherwise they are to be resanctified.†

Manbhum, Bankura and some parts of Burdwan, as at that time, according to him, the modern Eastern Bengal had been under water. (Vide Bángalár Purábritta p. 100). This view may be taken with caution as we find in the Saktisangam Tantra that Banga extended as far as the Brahmaputra :

“রত্নাকরং সমারভ্য ব্রহ্মপুত্রাস্তগং শিবে ।
বঙ্গদেশ ময়া প্রোক্তঃ সর্বসিদ্ধিপ্রদর্শক ॥” শক্তিসঙ্গম তন্ত্র ।

† Mr. N. N. Bose Práchyá Vidyá Mahárna va says :—

“অতি পূর্বকাল হইতেই অঙ্গ, বঙ্গ, কলিঙ্গ অর্থাৎ সমস্ত প্রাচ্য ভারত আৰ্য্য, বৈদিক ও স্মার্ত ব্রাহ্মণগণের চক্ষে অতি হেয় ও পতিত দেশ বলিয়া গণ্য ছিল। এই কারণে খৃঃ ৪র্থ হইতে ৬ষ্ঠ শতাব্দী পর্য্যন্ত আৰ্য্যাবর্তে ব্রাহ্মণ প্রাধান্তকালে

After a time, the banner of Buddhism flew throughout Bengal. The country was entirely submerged in Buddhism. The Poundras with other inhabitants of Bengal, in no time, em-

যদিও এ অঞ্চলে বৈদিকানুষ্ঠান নির্বাহ করিবার জন্ত কোন কোন ব্রাহ্মণ আসিয়া ব্রহ্মোত্তর জমি লইয়া বাস করিতেছিলেন, তথাপি এ অঞ্চলে আধিপত্য করিবার জন্ত কোন উচ্চপদস্থ বৈদিক ব্রাহ্মণ আসিয়াছিলেন কিনা সন্দেহ। * * * *
 গুপ্ত সম্রাটগণের সময়ে—অথবা মানবপতি যশোধর্মদেবের দ্বিত্বিজয় কালে যে সকল উচ্চপদস্থ ব্রাহ্মণ এদেশে আসিয়াছিলেন, তাঁহারা পাতিভ্যের আশঙ্কায় এদেশে স্থায়ীভাবে বাস করিতেন না। এখানে আসিয়া তীর্থগুলি দর্শন করিয়া দেশে ফিরিতেন।”

Vide “বঙ্গের জাতীয় ইতিহাস” রাজশ্রুতকণ্ড ;

Part I, p. 49.

The mention of pilgrimage, in the laws of Manu, shows that any how there had been Aryan connection with the land. After the time of the Sutrakāras, Hindu civilisation held out its conquest over Bengal, and was replaced by Buddhism, to which time the above verse of Manu refers. The country though entirely flooded with the spirit of Buddhism, had not lost the importance of the places of pilgrimage lying on it. And, though Manu flourished before the Buddhistic Age,—the present verse was a subsequent interpolation,—in support of which we quote the view of the great scholar :

“We have seen before that the laws of Manu in their earlier or Sutra form were prevalent in India, and were much respected by the other Sutrakāras in the Rationalistic Age. Those earlier laws, however, have been lost to us, and the Institutes of Manu which we have now,

braced the new religion * The subsequent law-

were completely recast and put in verse in the Buddhist Age. They reflect, therefore, the Hindu manners and customs of the Buddhist Age, and thus form an intermediate link between the earlier Sutra works of the Rationalistic Age and the later Dharma Sastras of the Puranic Age."

Vide Mr. R. C. Dutt's "A History of Civilisation in Ancient India." Vol. II pp. 80-81.

Vide also "যশোর খুলনার ইতিহাস" Vol. I. p. 149. "বঙ্গের জাতীয় ইতিহাস, ব্রাহ্মণকাণ্ড" pp. 57 and 78 and "বাঙ্গালার প্রাবৃত্ত" p. 118.

* "বুদ্ধদেবের জন্ম গ্রহণের পূর্বে বাঙ্গালায় এই সকল জাতি (পৌণ্ড্রাদি) বাস করিত।"

A paper on Buddhism in Bengal—

by M. M. Haraprasád Sāstri, M.A.

In support of the all pervading Buddhism in Bengal the following extracts may be quoted :

"During the life time of Goutama his teaching had not spread much beyond the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala (roughly Behar and Oudh). But now as fresh adherents grouped themselves under the leading disciples—Kāśyapa, Ananda, Moggallāna and Sāripatta—its influence slowly widened, and men began to complain that the whole country was turning celibate and donning the yellow robe." *The Story of Buddhism*—by K. J. Saunders; pp. 45-46.

"In the third century B. C., Kalinga was conquered by Asoka the Great, as we learn from his inscriptions, and this conquest probably facilitated the spread of Buddhism in these provinces, and also brought Bengal

givers define Bengal as a prohibited area for the Hindus on account of its Buddhist connection.

The Debal Smriti says :

“সিন্ধু-সৌবীর-সৌরাষ্ট্রাংস্তথা প্রত্যস্তবাসিনঃ ।

অঙ্গ-বঙ্গ-কলিঙ্গৌদ্ভান্ গত্বা সংস্কারমহতি ॥”

Hemádri said that one should not dine with the Bengalees in the same row on the occasion

and Orissa in closer connection with the civilisation of Northern India.”

Mr. Dutt's "Ancient India"—Part II. p. 166.

“বঙ্গদেশে কোন সময়ে বৌদ্ধধর্ম প্রচারিত হইয়াছিল। কণিকের সময় অঙ্গ বঙ্গ কণিকপুত্র হণিকের সাম্রাজ্যের অন্তর্গত হইয়াছিল। ইহার পর মিহির-কুল বঙ্গদেশ জয় করিয়াছিলেন বলিয়া অনুমিত হয়।”

The History of Gour—by Pandit R. K. Chakravarti, Vol. I. p. 25.

“খৃষ্ট চতুর্দশ শতাব্দীতে বঙ্গদেশে বৌদ্ধ ও জৈনদিগের অত্যন্ত প্রভাব ছিল।”

Vide *Bángálár Purábritta*, p. 159.

The long term of reign of the Pála kings in Bengal, who were Buddhist in faith, did much in turning the country into the spirit of Buddhism. Houen Tsang saw twenty Sangharáms and 300 priests in Pundra (Northern Bengal), thirty Sangharáms and about 2000 monks in Samatata (East Bengal), ten Sangharáms in Támralipta (South Western Bengal) and ten Sangharáms in Karna Suvarna (Western Bengal); Fahian saw 24 Sangharáms in Támralipta; this shows how the people was becoming adherents to the new faith in numbers. Vide Watters' *On Yuan-Chwang*, Vol. II, pp. 63-193 and সমসাময়িক ভারত Vol. VIII, pp. 28-124. etc.

of Srádhyas. Sulápani laid down that going to Bengal except on pilgrimage was a sin which should be atoned for by re-investiture with the sacred thread, or observance of the penance—
“Chándráyana.”†

Thus the Poundras were regarded as still more fallen for their adoption of Buddhism ;—and their recent abode—the country of Banga (E. Bengal) was held in such a low esteem that even the mere trampling over its soil required re-sanctification. It is because of this deficiency of Bengal in Brahmins,—Adisura, the king of Bengal, imported five good Brahmins from Kanoj.‡ Living in disguise,—embracing Buddhism,

† “নিন্দিত দেশ গমনং। তৎ তু তীর্থযাত্রা ব্যতিরেকেন। নিন্দিত দেশ যথা। কারঙ্কর-কলিজোড়াক্ষ-শবর-যুগন্ধর-ভূমিলয়-সিদ্ধ-সৌবীর প্রত্যন্ত দেশাঙ্গবঙ্গকলিজাদয়ঃ। তৎপ্রায়শ্চিত্তানি,—এতান্ গতা তত্রৈব চিরমুদ্বিগ্না গঙ্গাদিগমনম্। তদশক্তৌ পুনরুপনয়নম্। অপি চির প্রবাসে পুনরুপনয়নং চান্দ্রায়নঞ্চ।”

The Práyaschitta Vibeka by Sulapáni.

‡ সংগ্রবৃত্তে কলৌ ঘোরে বৌদ্ধধর্ম্ম হরদ্বিধাং।

আদিকৃত্যাখিলান্ দেশান্ কাম্বুকুজং বিনাকৃতঃ ॥

* * * *

বঙ্গদেশে ন বিপ্রো হস্তি বেদজ্ঞো যজ্ঞকারকঃ।

পরাশরালিকাঃ সন্তি কথং যজ্ঞ ভবিষ্যতি ॥

* * * *

* * * *

—whatever they did,—they never stooped to anything such as might have amounted to place them beneath the dignity of the Aryans. Indeed, in their new abode, they, disguised as Sudras, took to agriculture, as the soil of the land proved too much favourable for the exploit. With the increase of their population,—in search for fertile regions, they pushed further southwards, re-claimed lands and built their habitations, where still now they live, with their Kshattric lineage unstained.*

পতিতং বঙ্গদেশস্ত নশ্বতং কিং ত্রয়া কচিৎ ?

অঙ্গবঙ্গ কলিঙ্গেষু সৌরাষ্ট্র মগধেষু চ ।

তীর্থযাত্রাং বিনা গচ্ছন্ পুনঃ সংস্কারমর্থি ॥

* * * *

অতো বঙ্গাধ্যদেশেতু গমিষ্যন্তি ন বৈ দ্বিজাঃ ।

কথরিষ্যাসি ভূপালে তস্যোয়ং প্রার্থনা বৃথা ॥

Misra Kārikā by Dhruvānanda Misra.

* Buddhism had no effect on inbred caste system of the Hindu Community as the following extracts will show :—

“জনের বিখ্যাস যে বৌদ্ধ ও জৈনের অভ্যুদয়কালে প্রাচ্য ভারতের সমস্ত একাকার হইয়া পড়িয়াছিল,—তাই শকাদি নানা সমাজবাহ জাতি আসিয়া প্রাচ্য সমাজের অঙ্গপুষ্টি করিয়াছিল। জৈন বা বৌদ্ধ প্রভাবেই তাহার উচ্চজাতি বলিয়া গণ্য হইতে পারিয়াছিল। কিন্তু আমরা বলিতে বাধ্য যে, বৌদ্ধ জৈনাদি নানা ধর্ম বিপ্লবেও এখানকার আৰ্যসমাজে বর্ণভেদ বা জাতিভেদ উঠিতে পারে নাই। সে সময়ের জৈন বা বৌদ্ধ সমাজের আচার ব্যবহার ও

In the Mahábhárat, Anusásan Parba (35. 17-18) we see that 13 Kshattriya clans including the Poundras were vilified, denounced and cursed to sink into the state of Sudras, by the Brahmins,—as they had been unwilling to regard the latter as supreme for the effect of Buddhism. Though the Mahábhárat is said to have dated

ধর্মশাস্ত্র যাঁহার আলোচনা করিয়াছেন, তাঁহারাই বলিতে পারিবেন যে, আর্য বা ত্রৈবর্ণিক ও শূদ্র এই জাতিভেদ চিরদিন প্রতীচ্য ও প্রাচ্যভারতে অক্ষুণ্ণ ছিল;—আমাদের স্মৃতি প্রাণাদিতে যেমন আর্য বা ব্রাহ্মণ ক্ষত্রিয় ও বৈশ্য এই ত্রিঘর্ণের উচ্চাধিকার প্রদত্ত হইয়াছে। কিন্তু শূদ্রের কোন উচ্চাধিকার অধিকার নাই; জৈন ও বৌদ্ধাচার্যগণও সেইরূপ শূদ্রকে কোন উচ্চাধিকার প্রদান করেন নাই। জৈনদিগের ধর্ম সংহিতায় শূদ্রগণ ‘অভূম’ অর্থাৎ অনধিকারী বলিয়া নির্দিষ্ট হইয়াছে। এদিকে বৌদ্ধদিগের ‘মহাবগ্গ’ নামক স্থপ্রাচীন পালি গ্রন্থে শূদ্রদিগকে কোনও উচ্চাধিকার দিবে না, এইরূপ বুদ্ধদেবের আদেশ আছে। সুতরাং জৈন ও বৌদ্ধদিগের প্রাচীনতম শাস্ত্র হইতে আমরা পাইতেছি যে, ভারতের আর্য সমাজের জাতিবিচাররূপ সনাতন নিয়ম কেহই পরিত্যাগ করেন নাই। মহাভারতে আমরা পাইয়াছি যে, অঙ্গের লোকেরা শাস্ত্র ধর্ম পালন করিয়া থাকেন। জৈন ও বৌদ্ধদিগের প্রাধান্যকালে এখানে ধর্মনীতি কতকটা পরিবর্তিত হইলেও প্রাচীন আচার বিশেষ পরিবর্তিত হইয়াছিল বলিয়া মনে হয় না। যেমন স্থপ্রাচীন ব্রাহ্মণ সমাজ মানবধর্মশাস্ত্রানুসারে আচার ও ব্যবহার রক্ষা করিয়া আসিয়াছেন, জৈন ও বৌদ্ধগণও সেই মনুর স্মৃতি অনুসারেই বরাবর চলিয়া আসিয়াছেন;—এমন কি শাম ব্রহ্ম প্রভৃতি স্থানের বৌদ্ধ সমাজ আজও মনুর স্মৃতি অনুসারেই রাজধর্ম ও লোকধর্ম চালাইতেছেন।”

Vide the *Biswakosh*, and also *Banger Játíya Itihásh Rájanya Kánda*, p. 53 by Mr. N. N. Basu.

further back than Buddhism, the Slokas seem to have been interpolated into it subsequently.*

For a long time, there had been rivalries and antagonisms, factions, party-cliques and deadly intrigues and assassinations incessantly going on between the Brahminists and the Buddhists, enticing and inducing by entreaties and persuasions or forcing under royal edicts and mandates,—conversions, reconversions and conversions back again, partial and narrow Brahminical risings here and there—breaking the long-standing, all-pervading and universally extending monotony of paramount Buddhism, some one or other of the kings becoming converts to Brahminism, establishing it and prohibiting Buddhism, and after his death

Brahminism conquers Buddhism and becomes the prevailing faith of the country again.

* মেঘলা জাবিড়া লাটাঃ পৌণ্ড্রকোষশিরাস্তথা ।

শৌভিকা দরদা দার্বাক্ষৌরাঃ শবরা বর্বরাঃ ॥

কিরাতা যবনাক্ষৈব তান্তা কক্সিয়জাতয়ঃ ।

বৃষলত্মমুগ্রাণ্ডা ব্রাহ্মণাণামমৰ্ঘণাং ॥

The Mahábhárat, Anusásan Pārba,

Chap. XXXV, Slks. 17-18.

Some details of the interpolated portions of the Mahábhárat will be found in Mr. Bejoy Chandra Majumdar's article "মহাভারতের প্রকৃতি ও প্রকৃষ্ট রচনা"—in the "Prabási" Part VI. No. 8.—Vide also বাঙ্গালার ইতিহাস Vol. I, p. 26 by Mr. Rákháldás Bannerjee.

his successor encouraging Buddhism and suppressing Brahminism within the dominion and men becoming Buddhists as before, and the like. The Buddhists called others as the 'Heretics' and 'O-nárya' (non-Aryan) or 'O-Hindu' where and when they prevailed and some one of the others,—say the Brahminists, called the Buddhists and the rest heretics and non-Hindu when they prevailed; and so forth. In the long run the Brahminists gained ground and about Hiuen Tsang's time (625-46 A.D.) they won over about half the people, and the temples of Deva ranged side by side with the Buddhist Sangharáms (big houses for the congregations), Mathas (houses for religious purposes) and Stupas (high and stupendous structures for commemorations) in almost equal numbers in every city, town and village, very like the present mosques ranging side by side with the temples.

On one occasion—in about 712 A. D., the Brahminists under the sage Sankaráchárya (who died at the age of 30)—backed by the king Sudhanwá,—feigning equality of all men as parts of one all pervading soul (*Ekátmá-báda*) could defeat all sects throughout India; but after their demise, men became Buddhist as before. This state of things went on till Brahminist

Brihaspati's suicide on defeat in religious discussion with the Buddhist Jihmoni about 1350 A.D. in Bengal, and 50 years more,—when Udayana, Brihaspati's son, successfully defeated the Buddhists finally and established the Brahminical supremacy for ever in Bengal, although the spark of Buddhism worth noting was visible there even at the beginning of the 18th century.* The Vishnubites and Vaishnavism† were the

* Still many instances of Buddhist customs lurk in Hinduism in Bengal,—the *Charak* and *Nil* festivals, the worship of *Sitalá*, *Manasá* and other minor gods and goddesses,—the custom of worshipping *Dharma Devatá*, *Kalurái* etc. are sure and certain traces of latter or Tantric Buddhism. Vide *আর্য জাতি*, p. 90.

† Cf. “The Vaishnava religion in many of its forms seems to be only a survival of the Buddhist religion. There is the same theoretical equality of all men and of all castes, and the same prohibition against the destruction of animal life etc.”

Mr. Dutt's “Civilisation in Ancient India”;
Part II, p. 194.

Mahámahopádhyaíya Hara Prasád Sástri seeks to term it “Sahajíá Dharma” (সহজিয়া ধর্ম), and some call it ‘Tantric Buddhism.’

Vide M.M. Sástri's Bengali essay on “Buddhism in Bengal,” and also *আর্যজাতি* (The Aryan race) by Bábu Satis Chandra Sányál, p. 96, foot-note.

chief medium to reconcile men. In it there could be no distinction whatever among men of all classes, or functions, or professions. It observed image worship,—but did not tolerate worship by proxy ;—all Vaishnabas could be lay-masters of ceremony as well as priests. Herein it excelled Buddhism, it was more liberal. Men first turned out Vaishnavas. And, then by Puránas—caste, worship by proxy and supremacy of the Brahmins were introduced and established among the people. Thus the Buddhists themselves became converts to Vaishnavism, and the Buddhists and the Vishnubites, converts to Brahminism.

Now, it happened that still there was a number of people,—amongst whom were the Poundras,—who did not first submit to Brahminism, but remained content with the Buddhistic or Vishnubite ways of life,—though subsequently they, on account of their miserable minority, yielded to the Brahminists who maliciously punished their delay in returning to the Brahminical school, by placing them down on a low level in the society.*

* "বৌদ্ধ ধর্মের প্রাচুর্যের সময়ে অনেক ব্রাহ্মণ ও কল্লিয় বৌদ্ধ হইয়া গিয়াছিলেন ; পুনরায় হিন্দুধর্মের অভ্যাসকালে সেই ব্রাহ্মণবৌদ্ধ কল্লিয় বৌদ্ধদের অনেকে হিন্দু হইতে থাকেন। ষাঁহারা প্রথমে হিন্দু আচার

Moreover, the Brahmins determined, decided and concluded that if all the classes or professionals other than themselves be reduced to the Sudras, and be persuaded or made to call themselves Sudras, and if among all the Aryans or Hindus there be the only distinction of the Brahmin and the Sudra, their position of supremacy would remain safe and unmolested for ever.* In their endeavours they found Ballál Sen in Bengal so disposed and so much under their influence that they could get

Ballál Sen, a patron of the Brahminical whims.

অবলম্বন করিয়াছিলেন, তাঁহাদের মধ্যে গুণবান্ ব্যক্তিগণ পূর্বজাতি প্রাপ্ত হইয়াছিলেন; হুচতুর ব্রাহ্মণেরা তাঁহাদের অনাদর করেন নাই। বাহারা পরে হিন্দু হইয়াছিলেন, তাঁহারা আপনাদের পূর্বজাতি অপেক্ষা নীচভাবে সমাজে পরিগৃহীত হইলেন।”

The History of Gour by Pandit R. K. Chakravarti,
Vol. I., p. 182.

“এইরূপে বাঙ্গালার অর্ধেক বৌদ্ধ মুসলমান হইয়া গেল এবং অপর অর্ধেক ব্রাহ্মণের শরণাগত হইল, বৌদ্ধদিগের মধ্যে যাহারা তখন নিজের পায়ে দাঁড়াইবার চেষ্টা করিল—মুসলমান ও ব্রাহ্মণ উভয় পক্ষ হইতেই তখন তাহাদের উপর নির্যাতন উপস্থিত হইল। ব্রাহ্মণেরা তাহাদিগকে অনাচারণীয় করিয়া দিলেন অর্থাৎ বাগ্দী, কৈবর্ত, কীরাতের মধ্যে ফেলিয়াদিলেন—আর মুসলমানেরা তাহাদের উপর নানারূপ দৌরাত্ম্য করিতে লাগিল।”

A paper on ‘Buddhism in Bengal,’

by M. M. Haraprasád Sástri, M.A.

* It is because of this classification that we see no existence of Kshattriyas and Vaishyas in Bengal to-day,—except the Brahmins and Sudras only.

their object accomplished through him. In the eleventh century A.D. the Káyasthas, (who had been Kshattriyas before)—their ever-attendants and followers, became the first converts from Buddhism or Vaishnavism to Brahmanism and were termed the best Sat-Sudra. The next converts, the nine professionals *viz.*, the gardeners, the grower of Til (or the oil-man?), the weaver, the milkman, the barber, the grower of betel, the blacksmith, the potter and the confectioner were termed the Sat-Sudra under the title of Nabasák.* The next converts, the brazier, the perfumer or seller of spices, the conch-shell bangle makers etc. were termed the Jalácharaniya Sudra whose water the Brahmins would accept.

* “গোপোমালী তথা তৈলী তস্ত্রী মোদকবারুজী ।
কুলালঃ কৰ্ম্মকারণচ নাপিতো নবশায়কাঃ ॥”

The Parásar Sanhitá.

“গোপোমালী চ তাম্বুলী কাংসার তস্ত্রী শাস্ত্রিকাঃ ।
কুলালঃ কৰ্ম্মকারণচ নাপিতো নবশায়কাঃ ॥
তৈলিকো গান্ধিকো বৈদ্যঃ সংশূদ্রাশ্চ প্রকীর্তিতা ।
সচ্ছূদ্রানাস্ত সৰ্ব্বেবাং কায়স্থ উত্তমঃ স্মৃতঃ ॥”

The Ballál Charita 2-27-20—21.

“তিনিমালী তাম্বুলী, গোপনাপিত গোছালি ।
কামার কুমার পুটলী—এই নবশাখাবলী ॥”

Cited in ‘Sambandhanirnaya’, vide also ‘বঙ্গীয় সমাজ’
(The society of Bengal) by Bábu Satish Chandra Roy
Chowdhury p. 87.

The Poundraka Kshattriyas, the Subarnabanika Vaisyas and several others attached to Buddhism or Vaishnavism and unwilling to be reckoned as Sudra were termed Jal-abyabahárya (জল অব্যবহার্য্য) Sudra—whose water is not accepted by Brahmins.* The Brahmins that performed their

* Traditions say of various accounts on the social degradation of the Subarnabanikas, but this seems to be most reasonable.

As regards Jalácharan (use of one another's water), if there live eight Brahmins of Kanoj together there must burn nine ovens, none eating the rice or bread of the other. The Shaiva Brahmins will not accept the water of the Vaishnava Brahmin's pot and vice versa. The Vaidika, the Ráhri, the Bárendra, the Moithili, the Dravida, the Kanojiá and many other Brahmins are quite separate in mess, do not intermarry, nor accept one another's water. The proverb goes—if there live twelve Rájputs together there must be thirteen separate cooking pots ("বার রাজপুত তের হাঁড়ি "); none will eat the rice or bread of the other. And so of othercastes. Castes are pure or impure, water giving (water supplied by them acceptable) or not etc., depend merely on personal whims and caprices or practical convenience, seeing that the water of the Chási Kaibarttas (Máhishyas) is accepted in Midnapore etc., while in Dacca none accept their water (Vide the "Bengalee," 20th Oct., 1917 on "the position of the Máhishyas"); a certain section of the Bágdis are regarded as "water-giving" in some part of Midnapore; the Nabasákas allow their hookah to be smoked by the

ceremonies were excommunicated and out-casted by other Brahmins and were considered lower in position although equal to them in origin, quality and every other respect. And the rest were termed Osprisya (অস্পৃশ্য —untouchable) Sudra whose touch defiles others. All of them had to obliterate and forget their previous Kshattriya or Vaishya Varna.*

Rái Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Báhádur, the famous Bengali novelist, notices **Risley's Anthro-** that the Pods approach to the **pometric data.** 'Turanian (Turko-Iranian?) and aboriginal type of feature.† Sir H. Risley, in dealing with the average anthropometrical data, procured from measurements of the heads of some one hundred members of the caste, remarks that they have a higher nasal index which is a sign of their non-

Sutradharas in some part of the district. Now-a-days purity attributed to so-called high castes is not the least defiled by the use of meals from the Wilson's Hotel etc.!

Even the touch of a Mahomedan or a Christian is deemed to have no effect on water when aerated and bottled !

* For some portions of the above I am indebted to the author of the "Statistics of the Hindus."

† Vide in "Bibidha Prabandha" (বিবিধপ্রবন্ধ) by late Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the article "বঙ্গব্রাহ্মণাধিকার".

Aryan descent.* From the striking similarity of the Pods' shapes of the heads with those of the higher castes, the view at once sinks into insignificance. As regards the measurements recorded in Sir Risley's "The tribes and castes of Bengal" with reference to all selected castes, it is doubtful that his Indian assistants, who supplied the data, acted without any prejudice, as they hailed from higher castes,—and procured the same from random samples.†

Now, the deficiencies of Sir Risley's inferences of Anthropometry have been ably put forward by Prof. Homersham Cox M.A. in the

* Vide "The People of India" and "The tribes and castes of Bengal" by Sir Herbert Risley.

† The Census Report of Bengal for 1910 shows how the malice and caprices of the high-caste Hindu assistants of Mr. O' Malley served to make them work with a measure of irresponsibility in supplying false informations regarding the occupation of the Pods—which is recorded in the report as fishing ! The proof as to the accuracy of this sort of record can be boldly challenged. The matter has been specially dwelt on at some length by the author in an article entitled "অস্বস্ত জাতি ও শিক্ষিত সমাজ" contributed to the veteran Bengali magazine the Nabyabhárat (নব্যভারত) Vol. XXXV No. 5 and 6. The readers are also referred to the preface of this treatise for closer details.

† The Modern Review ; Vol. IX. Nos. 4 and 5.

pages of the "Modern Review" in the articles headed "Anthropometry and race" and "Statistical theory and Indian Anthropometry." We would request our readers to go into those scholastic contributions in details to test the accuracy of Sir Risley's view. Bankim Bábu's theory can similarly be refuted. He, as a historian, should not have taken into account the formation of heads in ascertaining the races, in view of the fact that the contradictions of Anthropometry are most numerous, in concordance with an eminent archaeologist Professor Ridgeway, who says: "As the physical anthropologists cannot agree upon any principles of skull measurement, the historical enquirer must not at present base any argument on this class of evidence."* The same

* Ridgeway. "The Early Age of Greece" P. 79.

In support of the fact that neither cephalic nor nasal index is of much use in determining race, what Sergi, the eminent professor of anthropology at Rome said, may be quoted :

"A method which is only in appearance a method inevitably leads to errors and can produce no results ; if the archæologists have had no faith in anthropology they have been justified."

Cf. also,—“Of two brothers one will have black eyes and the other blue ; one will have a long and the other a

caste is recorded to bear different data according to the measurements by different persons, as will be known from Sir Risley's "The people of India" (p. 380. Appendix III), in which there are enough variations between the tables of indices of the Koches as observed by Sir Risley and Lt. Col. Waddall respectively. Even Mr. O'malley, the compiler of the Census Report of Bengal, Behar and Orissa declares that "Anthropometry as a test of race has begun to fall out of favour".* However, I cannot resist the temptation of quoting hereunder some extracts from the articles of Prof. Homersham Cox :

"Dr. Collingnon formed different cephalic indices for the different departments of France, so that it is extremely probable that in the United Provinces the average indices must vary from district to district. Unfortunately in the "People of India" the entries under the heading "locality" are in general very vague * * *

"Another systematic error of a different kind is that which arises from the individual observer. Two observers do not get quite the same results. In measurements of nasal indices there seem to be very great differences, for I find from the tables in the "People of India" that one

round skull ; the father and mother will be tall and children short."

Holmes, "Caesar's Conquest of Gaul". P. 286.

* The Census Report, Bengal, 1911, Vol. I. P. 517.

observer gives for the Kukis of Rangamati the value 85 and another 91 '1. * * It is true the number of subjects measured was small, but still the differences must far exceed the probable errors. * * The existence of such large differences between independent observers excites doubts as to the accuracy of the values of the nasal index"

"These methods cannot, however, be applied to the statistics of the "People of India", for the number of measurements for each caste hardly even exceeds one hundred and this is too small a number to obtain a satisfactory frequency curve."

Statistical theory and Indian Anthropometry.

"We may then be practically certain that the actual order of the indices is largely a matter of chance, so that the alleged correspondence with the order of social precedence is of no importance whatever. Let us then consider only the really significant differences such as that between Brahmans and Chamars. The Brahmans have an average index of 47.6 and the Chamars of 86. This is a considerable difference, and the higher caste has, as it ought to have, the lower nasal index. But unfortunately for the theory, the Kanjars a caste even lower than the chamars, have a nasal index of 78, an index not much greater than that of the Brahmans and almost identical with that of the Chattris and Khattris, two of the best castes in the provinces. Further the Chamar or Muchi of Bengal has a nasal index of 74.9, which within the limits of error, is the same as that of the Brahman of the United Provinces. It seems then that if a low nasal index is a sign of Aryan blood, Sir Herbert Risley is wrong in attributing to the Bengalees merely a "strain of Indo-

Aryan blood in the higher groups." He ought rather to have said that even the Chamars of Bengal have as pure Aryan blood as the Brahmins of Hindustan."

"It will be seen I think from the above table the nasal index has no relation either to caste or race. The Rajputs of the Punjab are said to be pure Aryans, while the Coorgs of Southern India speak a Dravidian language and practise polygamy. Yet the two races have the same nasal index. This example would alone be sufficient to refute the assertion that a low index is connected with Aryan blood."

"—The converse proposition that the lowest nasal indices occur among the high castes is not true, for the Chandal of Bengal has a lower nasal index than the Brahmin of the United Provinces."

Vide—*Anthropometry and race*.

All our careful researches have proved that the Pods are the descendants of the Aryan or Kshattriya Poundrakas. They cannot be said to have belonged to any race of the non-Aryan or semi-Aryan family, nor to any race or caste formed by crossing. It is no wonder that the Poundra Kshattriyas—after labouring for centuries under such diversities of fate—no anecdotes of which were recorded in a systematic order in any contemporary literature of the past, would utterly forget the story of their glorious ancestry.

The Pods belong to the Indo-Aryan family.

Some hold that the Poundras have been no more Kshatriyas as the other castes mentioned along with them in the Institute of Manu, live outside India and are treated as Mlechhas.* To avoid the discrepancy we quote below passages from the Haribansha, which relate that all the Brátya or Sudraised Kshatriyas mentioned by Manu, with the exceptions of the Poundras, the Udras and Dravidas,—were turned to Mlechhas at the instance of Sagara,—

The Poundras' association with the names of several Mlechhas accounted for.

“সগরস্তাং প্রতিজ্ঞাঞ্চ গুরোর্বাক্যং নিশম্য চ ।
 ধর্ম্যং জঘান তেষাং বৈ বেণোত্তমং চকারহ ॥
 অর্দ্ধং শকানাং শিরসো মুণ্ডয়িত্বা ব্যসজ্জয়ং ।
 যবনানাং শিরঃ সর্বং কাষোজানাং তথৈবচ ॥
 পারদা মুক্তকেশাশ্চ পহ্লবাঃ শ্মশ্রুধারিণঃ ।
 নিঃস্বধ্যান্না বষট্কারাঃ কৃত্তা স্তেন মহাঅনা ॥
 শকা যবনকাষোজাঃ পারদাশ্চ বিশাম্পতে ।
 কোলিসর্পাঃ সমহিষা দার্বীশ্চোলা সকেরলাঃ ॥
 সর্কেতে ক্ষত্রিয়ান্তাত ধর্ম্য স্তেষাং নিরাকৃতঃ ।
 বশিষ্ঠ বচনাদ্রাজন্ সগরেণ মহাঅনা ॥”

Vide,— the Haribansha,
 Haribansha Parba, chap. XIV
 Slks. 15—19.

* Vide—“বঙ্গে ব্রাহ্মণাধিকার”, প্রথম প্রস্তাব by late Rái Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Báhádur.

i. e. The king Sagara, in obedience to the instruction of his preceptor Basistha, excommunicated the following Brátya Kshatriyas from all religions, and ordered them to bear different distinguishing symbols. So, the heads of the Sakas were made half-shaved, and those of the Yavanas and Kámbojas shaved in full. The Páradas were directed to keep dishevelled hair on, and the Pahlavas to preserve beards. Similarly the Kolisarpas, the Darbas, the Cholas and Keralas, who had been all Kashatriyas before,—were turned to Mlechhas. The same legend is found in the Vishnu Purána also.*

* শকা জবন কাষোত্র পারদ পহ্লবাহন্তমানা স্তং কুলগুরুং বশিষ্ঠং শরণং যযুঃ ।
অথৈতান্ বশিষ্ঠো জীবনমৃতকান্ কুত্ৰা সগরমাহ । বৎস বৎসালমোভিজীবন্মৃত-
কৈরনুমৃতৈঃ । এতেচ মমৈব ত্বং প্রতিজ্ঞা পালনীয় নিজধর্ম দ্বিজসক্ পরিত্যাগং
কারিতাঃ । স তথৈতি তদগুরুবচনমভিনন্দ্য তেষাং বেশাশ্রমকারণং ।
জবনান্ মুণ্ডিত শিরসোহর্কঃ মুণ্ডাংশ্চকার । প্রলম্বকেশান্ পারদান্ । পহ্লবাংশ্চ
শ্রাদ্ধদান্ নিঃস্বধায় বধট্কারানেতাশ্রাংশ্চ ক্ষত্রিয়াংশ্চকার । তে চাস্বধর্ম
পরিত্যাগাদ্ ব্রাহ্মণৈশ্চ পরিত্যক্তা স্নেহতাং যযুঃ ।

The Vishnu Purána,

Part IV, chap. III.

Cf :—

“কাষোজানাং সহশ্রৈশ্চ শকানাং চ বিশাম্পতে ।

শবরাণাং কিরাতানাং বর্ষরানাং তথৈবচ ॥

অগম্যক্রপাং পৃথিবীং মাংসশোণিতকর্দমাম্ ।

কৃতবাস্তত্র শৈনয়ঃ ক্ষপয়ন্তাবকং বলম্ ॥

The above goes to show that out of the twelve castes referred to in Manu's forgoing list of Brátya Kshatriyas,—the Kámbojas, the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Páradas, the Pahlavas, the Chinas, the Kirátas, the Daradas and Khasas were excluded from all religions and thrown down into the level of Mlechhas; the remaining three,—namely the Poundras, the Udras and Dravidas having been excepted.

Were the Poundras or the modern cultivating Pods Mlechhaised at anytime, the Sástras or legends would have revealed that to us; but we get no information of such an incident ever happening to them. Besides, the manners and customs of the people turned to Mlechhas in the way stated above, still stand disapproved by the Hindu society, while that of the Pods are strictly conformable to the latter. The language they speak is exactly common with that of the

দহ্যনাং স শিরস্ত্রাণৈঃ শিরোভিল্লনমূৰ্দ্ধজৈঃ ।
দীৰ্ঘকূটৈর্মহীকর্ণা বিবহৈরঙজৈরিব ॥”

The Mahabhárat, Drona Parba,
Chap. CXVIII.

Also,—

“ভল্লাপ বর্জিতৈ স্তেবাং শিরোভি শ্ৰুশ্ৰলৈর্মহীম ।
তস্তার সরযাব্যাটৈপ্তঃ সঙ্কোত্র পটলৈরিব ॥”

Raghubansha,
Canto IV, Slk. 63.

Brahmins and other high castes, and contains no peculiar words which are sometimes found in the colloquialisms of the non-Aryan Hindus.

Yet some may contend that the Pods are but

The Pods are not the Hinduised issues of the non-Aryan aboriginals or semi-aboriginals. the Hinduised issues of some non-Aryan aboriginal or semi-aboriginal people,—who submitted to the conquering Aryans, adopted

their religion and mode of tillage and formed a low caste in the Hindu confederation of castes. In reply to this I humbly ask them what became of the Brátya Poundras, who are said to have been one of the most numerous castes in the society, to have lorded it over a large tract of country and from time to time to have risen to such a power that once the Poundra King Básudeba ventured so far as to declare open hostility against Sree Krishna? Has any natural destructive agent swept them away from this earth? Do they still live in any other form in the Hindu society? So far as the Sástras and histories are concerned we find in them no mention of any instance speaking of their supposed extinction, or invisible absorption in any other caste. Besides, there are different people in existence, such as the Palis and the fishing Pods who are apparently of the Pulinda and the non-Aryan Poundra

origins. Then, why should we not believe that the Poundras having fallen to the state of Sudras still continue to exist in the form of the present cultivating Pods? From long forgotten ages, these sons of a fiery military race, have, in their disguise, passed centuries after centuries, ignoring the Kshattric duties for fear of extirpation by the enemies,—leading the life of a cultivating Sudra,—neglected,—uncared for,—contented with their accursed lot! The mysterious flow of time changed their edged swords and spears into spades and ploughshares! Satisfied with their present peaceful pursuit *i.e.* agriculture, they never cared to turn over the pages of their past glories and thus made their history more and more obscure by their obstinate indifference. Even when the weather became clear,—the terror of the enemies ceased to glare at them,—they did not care to return to their sublime post,—as in course of time they had forgotten their heredity and tradition; and the fertility of their reclaimed lands having made their ways of living easier, they had no regard for the hard-lotted life of a Kshattriya! Thus they piled up dirty ignorance over the bright edifice of history! Yet in some measure, they inherit the strength, valour, unity and military traits of their predecessor, and retain some Kshat-

tric customs handed down from generation to generation till the present days which are dwindling into insignificance. Some of them will be found keeping twelve days in moaning,—a compulsory custom of the Kshattriyas which still survive in them.* Their women after childbirth are regarded as touchable on the tenth day from delivery, and the complete purification are still invariably performed on the twenty first day. This practice is to be followed by the twice-born castes only. † So their present customs in life also throw light on their Kshattric origin.‡

* “—द्वादशाहेन ভূমিপঃ”

The Manu Sanhitá.

† “ব্রাহ্মণী ক্ষত্রিয়া বৈশ্য প্রহ্লাদশভিদ্দিনৈঃ ।

গতৈশূদ্রাতু সংস্পৃশ্য ত্রয়োদশভিরেব চ ॥

The Adipurána.

“হৃতিকং পুত্রবতীং বিংশতিরাত্রেণ স্নাতাং ।

সর্বকর্মাণি কারয়েৎ মাসেন স্ত্রীজননীমিতি ॥

Paithinashi.

“শূদ্রেতরায়াঃ পুত্রজননপ্রযুক্ত বিংশতি রাত্র্যর্শোচঃ—”

The Sabdakalpadruma.

‡ “প্রচ্ছন্ন বা প্রকাশ বা বেদিভব্যাঃ স্বকর্মাভিঃ ।”

The Manu, Chap. X, Sloka 40.

N. B.—The women of the castes other than the Sudras are, according to the Sástric custom, to use the surname ‘Debi.’ Though not universally,—but in many instances the old records of the state show

The Hindu society at large breeds strong prejudice against these illfated people, who, pressed by circumstances, concealed their real birth and embraced the life of the cultivating Sudras.* Even this prejudice often misleads many

Some Prejudiced Hindu writers.

that the title "Debi" was applied to the names of the Pod women as surnames. The author has seen an old bonafide document, which is still in the custody of a friend of his, bearing the date of about a hundred years ago, in which a Pod woman's name is written as "Tárámani Dei" (দেই) or Debi ("Dei" being the corruption of "Debi"—vide the 'Prabási' p. 187 for B.S. 1309, No. 5 and also উড়িষ্যা চিত্র or the Sketches of Orissa by Mr. Jatindra Mohan Sinha, p. 68, foot-note). The woman referred to belonged to the famous Midyá Chowdhury family of Hijli, Midnapore. The application of this surname at a time when no idea of social improvements occurred to the Pods, leads to the confirmation of the belief that they were Kshattriyas in origin.

* জীবেদেতেন রাজস্থ্য সর্কেনাপ্য নয়ং গতঃ ।

নদেব জ্যায়সীং বৃত্তিমভিমন্তেত কহিচিং ॥

The Manu, Chap. X, Sloka 95.

Also,

রাজস্থ্যক সদ্ভূতং সংগ্রামো ভুমিশাসনম্ ।

অত্রাশক্তৌ বণিগ্ধুত্তং শূদ্রবৃত্তমথাশ্রয়েৎ ॥

The Mahánirbán, 8/11.

কত্রিরোহপি কৃষিং কৃদ্ধা বিজান্ দেবাংশ পূজয়েৎ ।

The Parásar Sanhitá, Slk. 15.

notable personalities to record unfounded anecdotes concerning them ! * Often times, writers of caste literatures as well as those making passing references in dealing with other subjects,—have chosen these people as the object of their antipathy by relating untrue and biased accounts regarding them ! Those references have so long passed quite unnoticed and unprotested by the community. It is a pity that these records without any proof of their accuracy and authenticity

যতোহবশ্যং গৃহস্থেন গবাদি পরিপালনম্ ।

কৃষিকৰ্ম্মাদি চাপৎস্ব দ্বিজামস্ত্রণমেবচ ॥

The Apastambha, Slk. 5.

কত্রিয়শ্চ ক্রিতিক্রাণম্ । কৃষিগোরক্ষাবাণিজ্যকুসীদযোনিপোষণাদি বৈশ্যশ্চ ।
শূদ্রশ্চ সৰ্ব্বশিল্পানি । আপদনন্তরাবৃত্তিঃ ।—etc., etc.

The Vishnu Sanhitá, 5—6.

The above passages lay down that a Kshatriya will adopt agriculture as his alternative profession in time of danger, or when emergency occurs.

* Some notable writers—such as Pandit Lál Mohan Vidyânidhi, Rái Sáhib Dinesh Chandra Sen, B.A., Pandit Rajani Kánta Chakravarti, the author of the History of Gour, Bábu Sarat Chandra Chatterjee—the reputed novelist of the day and others—in response to the author's humble enquiries have kindly expressed their regret for their mistaken references to the caste, and promised to retract such portions from their books at the time of the future editions.

—never questioned, never criticised,—never tested by facts,—will serve to supply materials in the hands of future historians and act as authorities on the subject, as they will be calculated to have depicted the true pictures of the time when they were written ! It is hoped that such distortions of facts and gross injustice to a people which constitutes an essential element of the nation, will no more be indulged in,—and the historians as well as the critics will enlist their every endeavour in the loving study of the genuine history, not departing from the royal road of truth and not following the mere instinct of inbred hatred,—which, indeed, account for no material reason.

Now, to sum up what has been said : that

Summary.

‘Poundra’ is the generic name of the cultivating Pods ; the Sástras speak of two different kinds of Poundras,—the Aryan and the non-Aryan ; that the manners and customs of the cultivating Pods corresponding to those of the Aryan Poundrakas as described in the Sástras,—and dealing with their designation,—*Balái* or *Báleya*, under the category of which the Aryan Poundras fall,—they (the cultivating Pods) appear to have descended from the Aryan Poundras ; that the non-Aryan Poundras are a distinct people and still to be found in the form

of some sub-castes ; that the Aryan Poundras fell to the state of Sudras through omission of sacred rites,—as they embraced a disguised life to escape the avowed extirpation of Parasuráma and came to be known as the Brátya Kshattriyas ; that they embraced Buddhism during the Buddhist influence, and on the restoration of Brahmanism,—their unwillingness to submit to the caprices of the Brahminists, added to the deplorableness of their condition. Hence, the cultivating Pods are Brátya Kshattriya.

THE CONCLUSION.

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So far we have seen that the Kshattric blood in the cultivating Pods still remains unstained. Centuries of residence in a country, where peace had been seldom tried by intruders' weapons, and sole dependence for living on the agricultural life, certainly produced an enervating effect on them. A change came over the spirit of the people, which misleads an inquisitive eye to form the true estimate of their past history. Without energy to look at their brilliant past, they, in their indifference buried their ancient glories under the dirty dust of oblivion ! Who seeks to lift the obscuring veil dropped over their great past ! Who breathes a passionate love and sympathy for the people,—so injudiciously down-trodden ! With lapse of time, the social aristocracy is more and more expelling this innocent people from the domain of brotherhood and widening the gulf of separation by continuously aggravating hatred ! However, it is gratifying to note that a number of the educated bulk of the society has begun to cast their sympathetic glances on their oppressed brethren.

Now, it will not be out of place to see if these fallen Poundras are ever entitled to rise on their former status,—to revert to their Kshatriic mode of life. It is found in the Mahábhárat that the saint Kásyapa resanctified many Brátya Kshattriyas at the solicitation of Prithibi (the Mother Earth). The following passages quoted from the Mahábhárat will bear testimony to the fact :

পৃথিব্যুবাচ ।

“সন্তি ব্রহ্মণ্ ময়ি গুপ্তা এতে ক্ষত্রিয়পুঙ্গবাঃ ।
 হৈহয়ানাং কুলে জাতাস্তেষাং রক্ষন্ত মাং যুনে ॥
 অস্তি পৌরব দায়াদো বিদূরথশ্রুতঃ প্রভো ।
 ঋক্ষৈঃ সংবর্দ্ধিতো বিপ্র ঋক্ষবত্যথ পর্বতে ॥
 তথাহ্নু কম্পমানেন যজ্ঞনা হথা মিতৌজসা ।
 পরাশরেণ দায়াদঃ শূদ্রবত্তস্ত স দ্বিজঃ ॥
 সর্ব কশ্মেত্যভিখ্যাতঃ স মাং রক্ষতু পার্থিবঃ ।

* * * *

ততঃ পৃথিব্যা নির্দিষ্টাং স্তান্ সমানীয় কাশ্যপঃ ।
 অভ্যধিক্শ্রমহীপালান্ ক্ষত্রিয়ান্বীৰ্যা সম্মতান্ ॥

The Mahábhárat—Sántiparba.

Chap. XI, Slks. 75—76 and 88.

i.e. Prithibi said to Kásyapa,—“those Kshattriyas have been lying on me in concealment

changing their names, castes and occupations. Some of them are descendants of Kártabirya ; please, bring them and save me ! They include the sons of the Biduratha Kshattriyas, whom the bears brought up in the hills. Some were saved by the saint Parásara ; they belong to the Soudásha kings and have been living in the state of Sudras. Let those qualified Kshattriya princes reign over me !”—Kásyapa, having heard this, brought the aforesaid Brátya Kshattriyas and crowned them after their sanctification.*

So, the Pods,—those neglected sons of the powerful Poundras can be restored to their former prestige, re-installed in their original status—by performing due ceremonies in obedience to the directions prescribed by the Sástras. It is a pleasure that in the meantime the Pods have been able to realise their obscure condition and have invested a considerable portion of their energy towards their progress in the society !

* Cf. *সুবীজকৈব হৃক্ষেত্রে জাতঃ সম্পদ্যতে যথা ।*

তথার্যাজ্জাত আৰ্য্যানাং সৰ্বং সংস্কারমৰ্হতি ॥

The Manu, chap. X. Slk. 69.

This shows that men begotten of Aryan parents are entitled to all sorts of purification. Hence the Pods, retaining their ancient Aryan blood in a pure and unadulterated state in their veins till now, can be justified in claiming admission into the sacred practices.

The golden rays of education beam forth over the new dawn of their life !* They strictly adhere to the precepts of the Sástras in all their proceedings and undertakings and never obviate from the proper zone. Their attempt has raised a storm in the Hindu society which has lost its patent liberality to approach degeneration ! Several millions of these Pods, as the chroniclers

Cf. also,—গায়িত্রিপতিতা ব্রাত্যা ব্রাত্যস্তোমদতে ক্রতোঃ ।

The Gaurh, chap. XCIV
and the Yájñabalka, 39

“গায়িত্রিপতিতা ব্রাত্যা ব্রাত্যস্তোমেন সংস্কৃতাঃ ।”

ইতি মংস্তস্বজ্ঞে প্রায়শ্চিত্ত প্রকরণে ৩৮ পটলঃ ।

It is said that Sankarácárya had many Brahmins re-sanctified, who for generations had remained in the lap of Buddhism. Vide *বাঙ্গালার সামাজিক ইতিহাস* or the Social History of Bengal by Bábu Durgá Charan Sányál, P. 448.

* “—The endeavours of certain of the lower Hindu castes to raise their social status is reflected in their standard of literacy. Thus the Kaibartas, Pods, Namasudras and Rájbanshis all show signs of improvement and the Pods especially have made great strides.” Vide Resolution No. 3435 of the Govt. of Bengal on the Report on the Census of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikim, 1911 by Mr. L. S. S. O’ malley I. C. S., para 16 on Education.

say,* embraced Islam to escape the half-heartedness and selfish whims, which later on characterised the remote descendants of those magnanimous people, who had sung the hymns of the Vedas and started the deep and earnest enquiries of the Upanishads ! Thus the Hindus have marched off towards the jaws of death and destruction, and stand now as a “dying race” in the conclave of humanity ! Great is the penalty which the ambitious Hindus have paid for their total indifference towards the welfare of the men always standing by them ! For six centuries after 1200 A. D. the history of the Hindus is a

* গৌড়ের ইতিহাস (the History of Gour)

by Pandit Rájani Kánta Chakravarti.

“The Namasudras aggregate about 1,861,000, and the Pods nearly half a million ; but the full large numbers have been converted to Mahomedanism and now call themselves Shekh. There are ten and a half millions of Mahomedans in the Dacca and Chittagong Divisions, and it has been shown that the great majority of these are the descendants of converts from the ranks of these two castes. There must also be many converts of the same origin in the Southern districts of the Presidency Division. It would probably be safe to say that at least nine millions of the Mahomedans of Bengal proper belong to this stock.” Vide The Census Report of Bengal, 1901 ; p. 396.

blank ! They were only the Aryan nation in the earth who were civilised four thousand years ago,—they are the only Aryan nation in the earth who are socially lifeless and prostrate in the present day ! To the good luck of the Hindus—Sree Chaitanya Deva made his appearance with the gospel of love, which readily sheltered many neglected sons of the society from the clutch of Islam,—as the result of which a good many Pods became Baishnavas and yet form a part of the Hindu population. To quote from the well-known authority,—“the caste system, which unduly exalted the powers and privileges of priests, had the inevitable result of degrading all honest trades and industries other than that of priests. Thus the caste system in its latter phase has served a two-fold object. It has served to divide the nation and create mutual ill feeling. And it has served to degrade the nation in order to exalt the priests.”

After centuries of national lifelessness, there are seen indications of reviving life in the Hindu society. There is a struggle in the land to go beyond the dead forms of religion, and to recover what is pure, nourishing and life-giving ! There is an attempt to create a social union. In this epoch of regeneration, may the claims of the

Pods be considered in a right way by the Hindu society which has already taken up the task and directed its attention towards the people whom it has so long vainly deprived of their birth-rights ! It is no begging,—no crying but only pure self-dependence which will bring salvation to every unit of a nation ! The great mass of people which are untired in producing food grains with the hardest labour for the self-proud so-called high classes, must deserve honour and gratitude of the latter, as according to the saying, “a nation of lawyers and officials would starve ; as far as they are concerned, they are consumers and not producers.” They must have every respect for the dignity of labour,—and above all, for the equal rights and common heritage of mankind. The customs and usages having no foundation in Dharma and the prejudices separating groups of human beings from one another should be obliterated by the force of mutual love.

To conclude I must quote here the bright message delivered by that illustrious lady Mrs. Anne Bessant, the modern popular leader of the Indian public opinion, in her eloquent address under the heading of “Our duty to the Depressed Classes”:

“Can you for shame’s sake ask for that larger liberty for yourselves, unless you break the chains on the limbs of these outcastes that you have bound around them? It is useless to cry out to God, to cry out to England, to let you be free citizens in a free land, if the curse of this slavery is to remain upon the land and freedom is only to be the freedom of the educated people. You are educated, yes; but does that mean the sole enjoyment for yourselves, of art, of literature, of all that makes life fair, and that to these are to be added liberty and public life and the pride of the citizen in free land? Power means responsibility. Power and responsibility go hand in hand and how dare we ask for Indian freedom, if Indian slavery is the basis on which the pyramid of freedom is to be reared? It cannot be. You must raise your people before you can stand up with your faces to the sun and declare that you are worthy of freedom.” The very same news came from Lord Sydenham, who is said to cherish an unfavourable attitude towards the political aspirations of the Indians; he said: “The Indians’ most pressing need is the abolition of caste system and here lies a magnificent field of work for real Indian patriots.”

So, they of two contradictory schools unanimously pronounced that the salvation of India lies in releasing the great bulk of the population from the shameful slavery in which they had been thrust into for generations. How happy it would have been if these noble utterances dived into the hearts of many Indians to resound the sky with the cries for readily relieving those people, who chained with heartless social usages in the name of religion, have been long refused access into the domain of fraternity—deprived of the privilege to exercise the natural rights of God's creations—to make use of the common heritage of the humanity ! But alas, except a very few, the whole mass of the nation is still on the role of lying indifferent to the great call without the least earnestness, still indulged in pouring their vile stock of scorn on so many hearts,—the sacred temples where God resides ! yes, the platforms thunder with the fiery eloquence for the elevation of the backward classes,—the columns of news papers, pages of national literatures overflow with sympathy for them, but how many amongst such sympathisers have appeared in the real scene of work to prove conformity between their voice and action ! Unless the ties be broken,—unless the people be apt to think others' self-respect as their own,

unless they spread out their arms to embrace their neglected brothers, the nation is doomed to be left in the dungeon of eternal darkness.

The cruel imprudence and wrongful tyranny of men have shaken the heavenly throne of the Almighty! The air of the new Age sends forth the pleasant news of the advent of a new stream of life!—The atmosphere is surcharged with quite new feelings, new prospects, new thoughts, spirits and ideals which mark out the Age! The benign influence of the British Government has brought with it an equitable justice common to all people indiscriminative of castes or creeds. The ancient Sástric laws, which selfishly crossed the limit of reasons, are now dead and gone, and remain as mere things of the past. There is no concession in the British laws for the birth and parentage of a man, and a Brahmin is as well hauled before the Court of justice as a Sudra is done. The ambitious Brahmin criminal does no more escape conviction on the strength of his so-called high birth, and is treated in the same manner just as a low caste man is dealt with for perpetrating crime of a similar nature! The British laws have keen regards to the natural rights of men. It is under the vivifying influence of this Government that the backward

classes have begun to conceive life in themselves. May the attempts of this traditionally loyal people, * under the fostering protection of the British Crown, meet with the generous response of their rulers! And, may God shower in plenty His infinite kindness on this afflicted people showing them path on to a bright, enlivened and glorious future!

THE END.

* "They are, moreover, peace-loving and law-abiding and not at all litigious."

The Khulna District Gazetteer, p. 65.

